

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL AND MEASURE  
OF ADOPTEE IDENTITY

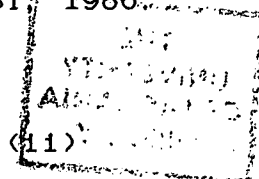
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL AND MEASURE  
OF ADOPTEE IDENTITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to develop a model of adoptee identity development and change. Further using the model, to develop a measure of adoptee identity which was psychometrically sound.

Following review of the general identity literature the concept of adoptee identity was discussed. Factors such as self esteem, decision to search, relationship with adoptive parents and circumstances of adoptive status disclosure were identified from the adoption literature as related to adoptee identity.

The components of adoptee identity were defined and an overall model of adoptee identity was outlined. The adoption literature suggested two alternative forms of this model of adoptee identity and these were called the credulous model and the sceptical model.

Using the model, the development of an adoptee identity measure was commenced. The measure was developed following the stages of test construction as outlined by Crocker and Algina (1986). The project was divided into three stages. Study one used a reunion study of 87 adult adoptees recruited via Adoption Jigsaw, W.A. to pilot test a 25 item identity measure based on discussion groups, and literature review. Four factors: Biological Identity, Alienation, Genealogical Concern and Curiosity were found.

In Study two these items were expanded to 52 items and were used in a national study of 943 adult adoptees recruited from two sources: Jigsaw/Triangle state groups (unsolicited); and media publicity (solicited). Considerable efforts were made to obtain a diverse range of adoptees including non searching adoptees.

Three stable factors emerged from the analysis. These were replicated within the study using the recommended method of Gorsuch (1983). One factor, Abandonment was excluded from the final Adoptee Identity Measure because it was considered on the basis of the results to be not directly related to identity, although an interesting constellation of items and worthy of further research.

The 25 item, two scale (Biological Identity and Curiosity) Adoptee Identity Measure was found to have good reliability and validity.

Study three posed four hypotheses to test the model. All were supported.

It was not possible within the confines of this project to determine which alternative (credulous or sceptical) model best fits adoptee identity development and change. This will be dealt with in a future study.

The results were overwhelmingly consistent in support of both the overall model and measure of adoptee identity developed.

The implications of the model and the use of the measure were discussed and future directions for research were suggested.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this study are to develop both a model and a measure of identity which are relevant to adoptees. These would enable a better understanding of the components of identity in adoptees and provide a framework and reference point for future research.

Identity is of particular relevance to adoptees, who by virtue of the process of adoption, leave their genealogical identity behind a legal curtain, upon placement with their adoptive parents. A mystery exists, because the individual adoptee's identity is based on incomplete, and unobtainable information.

Identity has been identified as a major concept in understanding a number of aspects of adoptees lives particularly as it relates to genealogical issues (Hurlock, 1955; Sants, 1964; Triseliotis, 1973; Schwartz, 1975; Sorosky, Baron, & Pannor, 1978; Swender & Hartenstein, 1979; Picton & Bieske-Vos, 1980). There is, however, confusion in the literature about what adoptee identity actually refers to. Various terms, for example biological identity, genealogical bewilderment, and identity lacunae have been used to refer to adoptee identity.

Identity is a central concept in theories of human functioning (e.g. Erikson, 1968; Harris, 1980; Breakwell, 1983a; Harre', 1983b) and is closely related to concepts of self, self esteem, and role. The literature on identity, however, is rather confusing because there is no set terminology, and the different terms used by various writers seem to refer to essentially the same concepts (e.g. identity, self, character, and personality).

The confusion in both the general identity literature and the adoption literature on the nature of identity has not facilitated the investigation and understanding of adoptee identity. There is confusion with the terminology and definitions of the parameters of identity, and yet

writers continue to use the concept of adoptee identity to explain other aspects of adoptee behaviour, or presentation; in particular the correlation of adoptee identity with desire to search for members of birth family; and with self esteem.

This study aims to:

- (a) develop a model of adoptee identity; and
- (b) produce a multi-factorial psychometric measure of adoptee identity.

With a model of adoptee identity it would become possible to examine the relationships between adoptee identity and self esteem; help explain the adoptee's decision to search; and permit the examination of other theoretically relevant factors (e.g. effects on identity of the age when the adoptee was informed of adoptive status; the manner in which the adoptee was told of adoptive status; and the adoptee's relationship with his/her adoptive parents). The validity of the measure will in part be defined by its usefulness in differentiating between various groups of adoptees in the general community; and in permitting the examination of the relationships between adoptee identity and other variables relevant to adoptees.

The most important step in developing a model of adoptee identity and subsequently constructing a psychometric measure of adoptee identity, will be to develop a theoretical framework based on the literature. This will necessitate the identification of the elements of adoptee identity. Other factors such as self esteem, the circumstances of being told of adoptive status, relationship with adoptive parents and decision to search have been linked to adoptee identity in the literature and should be found to be related if the model and measure are to be valid.

To assist the reader the following is a plan of this introduction:

- Conceptual framework of the area.
  - Components of Adoptee Identity.
- Identity and Historical Context.
- Theoretical Conceptions of Identity.
- Research Examining the Developmental-Formation Theories of Identity.
- Research Examining Theories of Identity Disruption and Threat
- Adoptee Identity
- Factors Related to Adoptee Identity
  - self esteem
  - decision to search
  - relationship with adoptive parents
  - age and manner of adoption disclosure
- Rationale for the Study
- Defining the Components of Adoptee Identity
- Multifactorial Conception of Adoptee Identity
- Towards a Theoretical Model: Credulous and Sceptical
- The Theoretical Components
- Investigation of the Theoretical Model

### Conceptual Framework

#### Components of Adoptee Identity:

Concepts of adoptee identity in the adoption literature are based on anecdotal information and surmise, not <sup>on</sup> in any theoretical framework. Adoptees talk about 'identity' and how they feel about their identity (or lack of it) and researchers, in the main, have accepted their statements without relating them back to theory. Mostly, the concept of a sense of identity specific to adoptees, is accepted as a fact, which is related to other variables such as decision to search and self esteem. A theory of adoptee identity needs to be formulated which takes into account

general theories of identity, but extends these to the specific issues relevant to adoptees.

The first step in this process must be the identification of the major components of adoptee identity. The two major components of adoptee identity which have been generally identified in the adoption literature are biological identity and alienation.

(a) Biological Identity:

Many contributors to the adoption literature have discussed the concept of adoptee identity (e.g. Sants, 1964; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1978) basing their discussion largely on adoptee statements of the kind:

- "I was finding it very difficult to accept the reality of life. I was bothered by the fact of my adoption and still am. I feel as being only half a person, the other half being obscured by my adoption." (Triseliotis, 1973, p 86).
- "It was extremely difficult to establish myself as a young adult, when the biological and historical aspects of my identity were unknown." (Swinden, 1983, p 135)
- "I never felt, or was given information that I was physically born. I was never compared with other family members; I did not 'take after' anyone; and was not like any relatives living or dead. What I missed was the absolute irrefutable physical sense of belonging and identity because I was who I was born and not because of my adoption." (Lenne, 1980, p 11).
- "I just want to meet someone who is part of me to help me feel less unconnected to anything." (Kowal & Schilling, 1985, p. 361).

- "You people, if you were not adopted, are three dimensional. You have a past which is rooted in genetics, a present and a future. I am a two dimensional person; I do not have that past. Especially now that my adoptive parents have died, I am spiritually in limbo." (Clark, 1984, p. 98 - 99).

The terms biological identity and genealogical bewilderment have been variously used to describe the feelings addressed in these statements. It is argued that a special component of identity exists in adoptees, which concerns the adoptees biological-genetic knowledge of him/herself. Sants (1964) introduced the term 'genealogical bewilderment' which he described as a state of confusion and uncertainty resulting from the severing of ties with the biological past, which develops in a child who has no knowledge (or uncertain knowledge) of his/her birth parents. Sants viewed 'genealogical bewilderment' as the cause of poor self esteem, and poor sense of identity in adoptees.

Kornitzer (1971) supports Sants' concept of 'genealogical bewilderment' and considers that the majority of adoptees are 'genealogically bewildered' to a greater or lesser extent.

Sorosky, Baron and Pannor (1975) consider that many adoptees are preoccupied with existential concerns coupled with feelings of isolation and alienation as a result of "the break in continuity of their life-through-the-generations that their adoption represents." (p. 24). They view identity as a life long concern for the adoptee, and 'genealogical bewilderment' as occurring throughout the adoptees life, particularly at times such as their marriage, birth of their first child, and the death of their adoptive parents.



Stoneman, Thompson and Webber (1980) in examining the outcome of reunion, for all parties, conclude that reunion provides the adoptee with a sense of identity through now having established a genealogical heritage.

The common theme for all these authors concerns the adoptees links with their biological history. The concept of Biological Identity is unique to the adoption literature and while widely accepted there has been little rigorous examination of it. It is logical to assume that a sense of one's place in biological time is a component in the identity of all individuals. The fundamental difference between adoptees and the majority of people raised by birth parents is that those raised by birth parents usually have ready access to information about their biological and family history, whereas adoptees have information about the biological and family history of their adoptive parents but little or none about their own biological history. Consideration of this issue will be discussed later in the section 'Identity and Historical Context'.

The concept of genealogical bewilderment is viewed, in this thesis, as a reaction (emotional and intellectual) to a lack of biological identity in adoptees. Biological identity rather than genealogical bewilderment will thus be used throughout this study and is defined as the adoptees' sense of belonging in biological time.

#### (b) Alienation:

In addition to the biological identity (rootedness) focus in adoptee identity, another focus is the sense of belonging, or alienation the adoptee feels with other people. An adoptee with concerns about his/her identity appears to have difficulties

trusting other people as illustrated in the following statements of adoptees:

- "I never really felt I belonged. I find it difficult to make friends or be close to people." (Triseliotis, 1973, p 89).
- "I feel isolated and empty. I am like an island and I feel I have nobody." (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 114.)
- "When everyone else is born and you're chosen, it sets you apart." (Seawell, 1979, p 24).
- "To feel different is an immediate identity crisis. In my life this manifested itself as a feeling of rejection no matter how genuine the offered friendship." (Press, 1980, p 21).

There is confusion and lack of agreement amongst authors in defining the concept of alienation. Fromm (1962) views alienation as a mode of experience in which the person experiences him(her)self as an alien. He is out of touch both with himself and with other people. Dean (1961) defines alienation as consisting of three elements; powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation. Seeman (1959) adds meaninglessness and self estrangement to Dean's three factors.

Stokols (1975) in reviewing the literature on alienation concludes that in general, alienation has been conceptualized as a static rather than dynamic phenomenon. He proposes instead a dynamic theory of alienation, focussed primarily at the small group level. Unlike the static conceptualizations which view alienation as a result of an individuals personality or other prior condition, he views the individuals alienation as developing within the context of an ongoing relationship between the individual and another person or group of people.

Schachtel (1962) claims that the doubt about, and search for, identity always goes with alienation from others. "When the lack of a sense of identity becomes conscious, it is often experienced - probably always - as feeling that compared with others one is not fully a person." (p. 75). Schachtel identifies two reactions to this feeling of not being a full person: first retreat and/or depressive resignation; and second an effort at disguise or role play. He sees these two reactions as usually occurring together, the balance being a matter of individual difference.

Schmitt (1983) makes the perhaps obvious observation that alienation is not an agreeable condition, and thus something few like to dwell upon. Unlike other writers (e.g. Dean, 1961) Schmitt views alienation as being a universal condition, existing in three main areas: problems of self identity; in relations with others; and in lack of meaning. Schmitt (1983) claims that identities are made and not found, and thus a person cannot be alienated because he has failed to find an identity. Failure to find identity is a result of the prevention by the individual or others from creating an identity. Stereotyping is a form of alienation which Schmitt claims is partially chosen and partially imposed by force.

Stereotypes become self imposed when a minority group adopts the rules of the majority group. Schmitt discusses this in terms of colonisation, and class differences and the power of language in differentiating. He comments on colonisation saying that children (of the colonised) are likely to learn a history in which they barely exist. The alienated, Schmitt argues, are lonely because their identities are blurred; as long as they are alienated from themselves they will be alienated from others. Loneliness is the most commonly mentioned example of alienation.

It is clear that adoptive status qualifies as a potential cause of various aspects of alienation. In examining alienation as it relates to adoptees and their

relationships with others, there are two major categories of relationships to be considered. The first concerns relationships within the family, particularly with adoptive parents. Kramer (1982) commenting on case work with adoptive families concluded that "families with adopted children often have unresolved problems related to the sense of belonging of the adopted child and the nature of that belonging." (p. 73). The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies (1980) in their booklet for adoptive parents "Explaining Adoption" state "The adopted persons who have an urgent need to find their natural parents, and those who start a desperate search, are those generally whose relationships within the adoptive family have not been satisfying." (p 25). Rautenan (1972) claims that the adoptive relationship is a very vulnerable one, containing all the usual hazards which may threaten the ordinary parent-child relationship, but magnifying them. Bohman (1970) concludes from his own research and literature review, that maladjustment amongst adopted children is in part explained by the inability of the adoptive parents to accept the adoptive relationship, and that this leads to disturbances in the parent-child relationships.

The second category of relationships is that with peer groups. Bohman (1970) states that disturbed relationships with peers is more common for adopted children than for children of the same age who are not adopted. Further, Bohman found that there was a sex difference, with boys having more disturbed relationships with peers than girls. A study by Reynolds, Levey, and Eisnitz (1977) with 200 volunteer adult adoptees found that the adoptees were inclined to be shy, wary of people, and ill-at-ease in dealing with others.

The adoptees relationship with his/her adoptive parents will be examined as an additional component in adoptee identity, and will be discussed later.

There is confusion in the literature as to whether alienation, as was expressed in the earlier statements of adoptees, is part of adoptee identity; causes concerns about adoptee identity; or results from adoptee identity. In this study the sense of biological rootedness and the sense of belonging/alienation have been discussed as separate concepts but it is acknowledged that they may equally be so highly related as to act as one concept.

#### Identity and Historical Context:

Identity is generally understood only in terms of the persons own life history. However there is support, from other sources than personal identity theories, for the notion that identity can be viewed under certain conditions as linked to past generations.

Anthropological studies indicate that an individuals relationship with his/her ancestors can be deeply entwined with that individuals conception of his/her identity (e.g. Keesing, 1980; Oliver-Smith, 1982). That is the individuals perception of links and continuity between the ancestors and him/herself in part, contributes to the individuals sense of 'myself' as an individual within the kinship or cultural community.

Two broad sets of conditions appear to make past generations relevant to present identity. The first concerns kinship systems, religious beliefs, family traditions, and formal inheritance systems which locate a person explicitly within a genealogical framework, such that roles, obligations, expectations, etc. are partially determined by that location (e.g. Keesing, 1980; Graves & Graves, 1980; Kitwood, 1983). That is the person knows by his/her position in the system, both what the system expects of him/her, by virtue of that position; and further what changes in position are likely over time. Carter (1982) states that it is "by means of the attributes, capacities, and signs of culturally defined

personhood that the particular human actor experiences himself as, and demonstrates to others that he is, the person he is supposed to be" (p 119). That is the individual is able within the appropriate community (kinship, religious, family, etc.) to gain information and substance for defining his/her identity. Life is structured by roles, and expectations (social and historical). Each person belongs to a group, which on the one hand defines aspects of personal identity, and on the other assigns a pattern of life.

The second set of conditions which make past generations relevant to a person's identity, concern the effects of the disruption of linkages with a person's past. Such disruptions may take various forms: migration, particularly forced migration (e.g. refugees, slaves); destruction of past cultural heritages; and long term separations within families (Henkin & Nguyen, 1981; Carter, 1982; Oliver-Smith, 1982; Paterson, 1982; Weinreich, 1983).

Forced migration breaks linkages by dislocating individuals without time for preparation for a new environment and life. Refugees flee for their lives with little of the memorabilia and tangible links with the past. Slaves are taken from their lives, families and home environment and subjected to a new life without the rights of person or property. Slaves actually lose their own identity and take on the label of property of the 'master' or 'mistress'. All migrants in leaving their homeland lose contact with their own physical historical place, and also with that of their ancestors; this is particularly relevant when there is a strong identification with the homeland. Destruction of past cultural heritages occurs during war and natural disasters, where the physical symbols of the group are lost; these symbols can be buildings, objects of art, and places such as a village, town or natural geographic place. These symbols are linked with the heritage of the group and thus each of the

individual group members. Even long term separations in families can create disruptions. Examples of these would be children being separated for long periods in boarding schools; workers who are away for very long periods as part of their employment; and long term war service.

The importance of biological identity to the adoptee appears to be consistent with phenomena associated with this second set of conditions; a disruption to the sense of genealogical continuity, which is more personal than cultural (with the notable exceptions of trans-racial and inter-country adoption).

### Theoretical Conceptions of Identity:

#### Overview:

Many of the fundamental issues at play in identity formation, change and expression for non-adoptees, would be expected to be present in adoptee identity formation, change and expression. In addition special issues relevant to adoptees would be expected to be involved.

It is thus logical to begin the examination of adoptee identity by first examining theory and research on identity in the general population. The essence of identity in most accounts is the answer given to the question "Who am I?" (Klapp, 1969, p. 5). However, answers to this question are typically complex with different components of meaning. The answers also change for the same individual over time (Klapp, 1969; Erikson, 1956, 1959, 1968; Josselson, 1980).

There have been two types of theory and research on identity. The first concerns the component parts or dimensions of identity. The second concerns the change in identity over time.

### Dimensions of Identity:

Harre' (1983b) in his theoretical conception of identity views identity as having two components: personal and social (Harre', 1979, 1983a, 1983b). Personal identity comprises both a sense of personal unity (the sum of the individual's unique personal attributes) and a sense of personal continuity (the individual's autobiographical belief system). Harre' (1983b) concludes that "the autobiographical belief system of a person constitutes the central core of the psychologically researchable features of personal identity." (p. 42). Social identity is "the set of social categories to which an individual belongs." (p. 42).

Breakwell (1983a) defines personal identity as "that part of the self concept which is free of role or relationship determinants." (p. 9); and social identity as "that part of the self concept derived from the individual's group memberships and interpersonal relationships and social position and status." (p. 9). Breakwell (1983a) goes on to observe that if "examined from a realistic dynamic standpoint personal and social identity are not distinct entities, they are merely different points in the process of development." (p. 11).

Harris (1980) reviewed the identity literature as it relates to multicultural society. He conceptualised identity as comprising individual and social components but viewed these in a different manner to Harre' (1979, 1983a, 1983b). Harris differentiated between individual identity - the individual's concept of himself in time and place; and social identity - other people's conception of the individual in time and place. Harris's concept of identity is based on the notions that identity is a process (i.e. it is dynamic and capable of change over time); and that an individual's identity is formed through social interaction taking place in a particular socio-historical context.



Erikson (1956, 1959, 1968), who is most often associated with developmental theories of identity, incorporates in his theory of identity two dimensions. The first dimension is an historical-genetic-time dimension, which is concerned with the unique history of the individual including past generations. The second dimension is the individuals relationships with others, incorporating "a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (Erikson, 1956, p. 57).

Thus there is consensus amongst many theorists that identity be conceptualized in terms of two dimensions (e.g. Erikson, 1956, 1959, 1968; Hewitt, 1975; Harre', 1979, 1983a, 1983b; Harris, 1980; Breakwell, 1983a). The first dimension is personal identity; an historical-genetic-time continuum, which is the individuals life line from previous generations through birth to the present. The second continuum is that of social identity or the sense of belonging or alienation in relationships the individual has with contemporaries. This is consistent with the view that adoptee identity comprises components such as biological identity and alienation.

#### Change in Identity over Time:

The concept of 'personal identity' in the psychological tradition is most closely associated with the work of Erik Erikson (1956, 1959, 1968). He asserted that the problem of 'personal identity' was not a characteristic of a minority group, but a universal one. He viewed development as a series of conflicts or crises. The individual emerges from each of these crises with either a sense of inner unity and well-being, or not. It is an ongoing process with the person either moving forward successfully to the next stage, or being retarded by trauma or unresolved crisis, and left with a lifelong scar. Erikson (1968) suggested that during confrontation with each crisis there was potential for growth as well as increased

vulnerability. Erikson proposed an eightfold developmental scheme for the life of the individual, the fifth stage, adolescence, being concerned with the establishment of 'personal identity'. Because the scheme is cumulative, involving the satisfactory completion of one stage before the next is attempted, failure at any stage would of necessity affect the total individual development, including identity. The sixth stage is early adulthood involving the capacity to form intimate and enduring relationships.

Erikson thus viewed identity formation as a developmental process which operates for the entire life of the individual, in which adolescence serves as a catalyst to precipitate the emergence of identity (Lott, 1984). The adolescent must synthesize past and future, "a synthesis which must include but transcend the past, even as identity does" (Erikson, 1956, p 98). That is the individual must come to terms with his past in order to sufficiently prepare for the future. Erikson places emphasis on both the unique history of the individual and the individuals relationships with others.

Marcia (1966, 1967, 1980) a major investigator of Erikson's theoretical concept of identity construes identity as a self structure..."an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history." (Marcia, 1980, p 159). The better developed this structure, the more aware individuals appear to be of both their own uniqueness and similarity to others; and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world. Marcia (1980) goes on to observe that identity is not the exclusive province of adolescence, but begins in infancy and ends in old age; i.e. identity is dynamic not static.

Marcia based his work on the identity formation versus role diffusion adolescent stage of Erikson (1968). Marcia defined identity in three ways. First the development of identity implies a structural state of the ego, which

occurs through Erikson's (1959, 1968) developmental scheme. Second, identity is a subjective feeling involving a sense of continuity of the past and the future. Third, identity achievement is evidenced by observable social behaviours, particularly the commitment to occupation and ideology (Marcia, 1966). He views crisis and commitment as the two criteria necessary for the individual to attain a mature identity; crisis he defines as the time during adolescence when the individual actively chooses between alternative occupations and beliefs; while commitment is defined as the degree of personal investment the individual expresses in an occupation or belief. Marcia proposed that late adolescence could be categorized into four identity statuses, which he thought to be individual styles of coping with the identity crisis of adolescence: identity achievements; foreclosures; identity diffusions; and moratoriums.

Muus (1975) like Marcia emphasizes Erikson's concept that the search for identity involves the production of a meaningful concept of self which links past, present and future. Muus contends that identity must be searched for, and is not given by society, or biological maturation, "it must be acquired through sustained, individual efforts" (Muus, 1975, p 63), and that this task is made more difficult if the past has lost the anchorage of family tradition.

#### Identity Theories: Conclusion.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this brief overview of the identity literature: first the terminology used is not consistent and thus comparisons between theoretical positions is made more difficult; second, identity is multifactorial in nature involving at the minimum, a time component and an inter-personal component; third identity is not a static but dynamic concept, which is affected by time and environment; and finally identity is a universal concept important to all individuals.

These theoretical frameworks have stimulated considerable research. The first type of research has focussed on the formation or development of identity in individuals; how identity is formed; and what stage(s) in the individuals life course are most significant for its development (e.g. Erikson, 1956, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1967; Keesing, 1980; Oliver-Smith, 1982; Breakwell, 1983a, 1983b). The second research focus has examined disruption or threats to the individual's identity caused by stressful life events (e.g. Henkin & Nguyen, 1981; Oliver-Smith, 1982; Paterson, 1982; Breakwell, 1983a, 1983b; Harre', 1983a, 1983b; Hitch, 1983; Kitwood, 1983).

#### Research Examining the Developmental-Formation Theories of Identity:

Erikson's theory has been perhaps the most influential in understanding adoptee identity, and yet he did not apply his theory of identity to adoptees, despite the fact that he was an adopted person himself. Erikson's theory is a difficult one to interpret, because while insightful, it lacks definitional and methodological precision (Kitwood, 1983; Rosenthal, Moore, & Taylor, 1983). Nevertheless the effects of Erikson's work have been considerable.

Erikson's theory incorporating identity formation in adolescence has been widely accepted. Josselson (1980) goes so far as to claim that Erikson has revolutionized thinking concerning adolescence in three main ways: first the notion of ego continuity: that adolescence is intimately linked to the whole life cycle, with particular tasks to perform, which have been in preparation all along; secondly, the notion of adolescence as a maturational necessity: that adolescence is a psychosocial demand which is imposed on the individual, whatever the wishes of the individual; and finally the notion of ego identity: that ego integration at adolescence is an

emergent phenomenon in the sense that the organization of aspects of self is more than the sum of the parts, and resides in the way in which the parts are synthesized. It is clear that Josselson's three points concerning adolescence, and applying to Erikson's stage five could equally apply to any other of the eight stages as outlined by Erikson.

Research examining Erikson's hypothesis that successful completion or resolution of one stage must preclude completion or resolution of the next stage is limited. Most research on this hypothesis has concerned the specific hypothesis that favourable resolution of the identity crisis (stage five) is the necessary precursor to favourable resolution of the intimacy-isolation crisis (stage six); that is, in order to establish an intimate relationship it is essential that the individual has already achieved a certain level of identity. Research results have provided support for this view (e.g. Constantinople, 1969; Orlofsky, Marcia & Lesser, 1973). McKinney, Fitzgerald, and Strommen (1982) conclude from their review of the literature that identity achievement is a prerequisite for the establishment of intimacy, but point out that most research has been with college students and that there have been inconsistencies.

There has been considerable research to test Marcia's conception of identity statuses (e.g. Marcia, 1966; Marcia & Friedman, 1970; Waterman & Waterman, 1971; Hauser, 1971; Podd, 1972; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973; Waterman, Geary & Waterman, 1974; Grotevant, Thorbecke, & Meyer, 1982; Lott, 1984). Much of this research on identity development has used the semistructured Identity Status Interview developed by Marcia (1966). There have however, been a number of questions surface concerning the measure. Grotevant, Thorbecke and Meyer (1982) identify two shortcomings: the interview examines the occupation, religion, and politics domains but does not examine interpersonal relationships as well; and there are

significant sex differences in the use of the statuses which have not been adequately explained. Marcia (1980) acknowledges the criticism of the identity status approach for women and suggests a new approach involving longitudinal studies.

Other difficulties in utilizing the identity statuses of Marcia concern the characteristics of the samples studied particularly concerning the age and occupations; most are college students, or high school students. Not only are these biased samples but more importantly age categories in adolescence have been identified as being critical in identity formation; e.g. Josselson (1980) maintains that the substages of adolescent development are best defined by developmental task rather than age, thus categories need to be broad bands, categorized usually as early, middle and late adolescence. In addition, the semi-structured interview as a measure has low validity and reliability. As Lott (1984) observes, the fact that the identity studies varied both in sample characteristics and factors investigated, makes it difficult to determine meaningful trends.

The developmental theories of identity concentrate on adolescence, because as McKinney, Fitzgerald and Strommen (1982) put it "The search for identity is part of the human experience at every age, although it is during the time of rapid growth and physiological changes of adolescence that identity assumes a major role in development" (p 10). It is highly likely that identity formation takes place during the adolescent period, and in subsequent periods in an individuals life course. Identity is most realistically viewed as a dynamic concept capable of change over time, and not a concept formed in adolescence and incapable of further change throughout the individuals life time. During adulthood significant life events, be they usual (such as marriage, birth of children, retirement); or unusual (such as a natural disaster, death of a significant other, war), may require the modification of the individual's concept of personal and social identity.

Adoptees commence the process of identity formation at a significant disadvantage compared to the average non adopted person. They lack fundamental information about themselves, information which is taken for granted by the rest of the population. This disadvantage carries the potential for difficulties in establishing a concept of both personal and social identity, and for increased vulnerability to significant life events which challenge identity.

Identity formation and change is not thus the exclusive province of adolescence. Adolescence should be viewed as a significant period in identity formation, but not the only period or influence. That identity is significant at other times in an individuals life course development is reflected in the following statements of adoptees.

- A mother of three children: "Identity means a great deal to me and I started feeling in this way especially since I became a parent". (Triseliotis, 1973, p 107).
- A woman of 26: "I stand before the mirror and ask, 'Who am I?'". (Triseliotis, 1973, p 86)
- A middle aged woman: "In order to know yourself you must know who you are and from whence you came." (Lenne, 1980, p 13)

#### Research Examining Theories of Identity Disruption and

#### Threat:

The theories of identity which relate to disruption and threat appear to relate well to the identity difficulties of adoptees as already exemplified in their own statements.

Breakwell (1983c) and her colleagues in the book, "Threatened Identities", examine in detail what constitutes a threat to an individuals identity. They examine threats to the individual; to the individual as a group member; and to the identity of a group. No mention is made in the

book of adoption, but it is clear that adoption fits as a threat to identity, in particular the identity of the individual and the identity of the individual as a group member. Breakwell (1983a) identifies two types of threat: first, queries about the content of identity. In content terms, identity is comprised of labels used to describe the individual. A challenge to identity content, can come either because the individual concerned actually changes, and the old labels are no longer valid; or because society changes the meaning or use of the labels. The second type of threat is a challenge to the evaluation of identity. If the individual's identity characteristics are labelled as bad, and the individual accepts the legitimacy of the connotations, then there is a threat to the individual's identity.

Breakwell (1983a) goes on to assert that the potency of these two types of threat rests upon the importance the individual places on being consistent, and on being able to maintain self esteem.

Duck and Lea (1983) examined the breakdown of personal relationships as a threat to personal identity. They state that the destruction of social identity may be one of the threats posed by relationship collapse. In some important senses, certain types of relationships establish a social identity for individuals and the decline of the relationships, has social as well as personal implications. They use marriage and divorce as examples. Two individuals marry, the marriage may be based on love (personal relationship) but the marriage also carries implications for social status, e.g. role, social position, legal position. Divorce implies the breakdown of the personal relationship, but the dissolution changes aspects of the social status of the individuals; changes in roles, social position, and legal position.



## Adoptee Identity.

The American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Adoptions (1971) stated that identity resolution is a difficult task for everyone, but is more difficult for the adopted individual who knows nothing of his/her ancestry.

Without origins an adoptee may perceive him/herself to have an incomplete sense of identity both at a personal and genealogical level. As Kornitzer (1971) observes, an adoptee without knowledge of origins realises that there are physical, emotional and mental qualities which cannot be explained by reference to the adoptive family. The adopted person has "the knowledge that an essential part of himself has, as it were, been cut off and remains on the other side of the adoption barrier." (Kornitzer, 1971, p 44). Wellisch (1952) found that adopted children have a unique stress related to their adopted status, which he called 'adoption stress'. Sants (1964) postulated further that a factor in this stress was 'genealogical bewilderment': the sense of confusion resulting from incomplete information regarding the individual's genealogical information. Sants further postulated that a state of genealogical bewilderment can lead to the development of both poor self esteem and a confused state of identity. For most adopted persons 'genealogical bewilderment' consists simply of "an occasional twinge of uneasiness" (Kornitzer, 1971). However, for others it is deeply disturbing. Kornitzer (1971) maintains that while some adopted people seem to be unconcerned about their birth family, and seem quite self contained, they are few, and that the majority do care to a greater or lesser extent. They may not show it, particularly to adoptive parents because of their love and concern for them.

Lion and Gillon (1976) comment that for the adoptee, "historical necessity is deeply embedded in the lifestream and identity of his psychological-adoptive family" (p. 6) while at the same time the environment's messages are that

the adoptee is not really what he/she appears to be. These conflicting messages create anxiety and uncertainty about his/her identity which frequently results in a search for origins. At the same time the adoptee can develop a fear of what may be found if such a search is initiated: possible rejection by birth parent(s); the discovery of 'unacceptable' birth family; distress to adoptive family; etc. In their study 'pre and post reunion' of 19 of 50 adoptees who utilized the Israeli "Open File" Adoption Law, Lion and Gillon found that for those adoptees who experienced reunions, there was a strengthening of previously held conceptions of their identity; while adoptees for whom there was insufficient information for contact to occur maintained the identity problems and preoccupation with origins already present.

Richards (1979) claims that children reared with little or no information about their origins are more likely to experience an acute identity crisis. Richards (1979) conceptualizes the self internalisation process as comprising three factors for children reared by a birth family: parents norms and values; peer group norms and values; and other individuals and society groups. For children reared outside a birth family (e.g. adoptees) parent norms and values becomes two factors: those of the substitute family and in addition those of the birth family. Richards states that the birth family factor hampers or complicates the process of identity formation in relation to the norms and values usually associated with having a family history. For most adoptees the birth family factor is not the accommodation of factual information but rather the fantasies and hopes of the adoptee concerning the birth parents. Writers in the clinical tradition have viewed fantasies about birth parents as a pathognomonic sign in adoptees (Schechter, 1960; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975) despite the lack of comparison figures of the frequency, duration or significance of these fantasies in the general population

of adoptees. That is, evidence based on adoptees in the psychiatric, penal and other clinical populations needs to be balanced with information about adoptees in the total population of adoptees. Kowal and Schilling (1985) in their study of 100 adult adoptees who contacted a social service agency or search group in Ohio, for information or search for members of birth family, found that frequent fantasies about birth parents was common in adoptees in the general community (i.e. not clinical patients). The role of these fantasies in the identity development of adoptees is as yet unclear, but of potential importance.

Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1975, 1976, 1978) concluded that adoptees are particularly susceptible to identity confusion because of lack of information regarding their genealogical origins. Sorosky, Baron, and Pannor (1978) believed that these adoption-related conflicts could result in 'identity lacunae' which can lead to shame, embarrassment and low self esteem. They found many adoptees in their reunion study to be preoccupied with issues of identity.

In reviewing the literature on identity conflicts in adoptees, Sorosky, Baron and Pannor (1975) commented that despite multiple references to adoptee identity conflict, no one had previously attempted to organize and integrate the ideas. Most impressions cited were theoretical formulations based on clinical observations of small caseloads. Sorosky, Baron and Pannor concluded from their review of the literature and their own work that certain life events focus the adopted person's interest on his/her own genetic background. They observed that a sense of genealogical bewilderment and increased desire to search for members of birth family was often triggered by times such as engagement, marriage, birth of first child, and the death of one or both adoptive parents. They later added to this list and developed a chronological chart identifying times of intense curiosity (Sorosky, Baron and Pannor, 1978). In doing this they were clearly recognizing the life long nature of identity concerns for adoptees.

The picture is one of confusion. Confusion of terms, of concepts, but beyond these difficulties is the lack of methodological precision. Most of the studies in the adoptee identity arena have been anecdotal. Anecdotal reports are interesting and suggest directions, but they do not permit rigorous study. The studies have used small biased samples. They have ignored life span issues (that is that identity may vary in importance and nature at particular points in a persons life). In addition the studies have not taken sufficient note of individual differences in understanding adoptees.

#### Identity Development-Formation and the Adoptee:

An adoptee's identity in development-formation is potentially affected by a lack of fundamental information about him/herself (viz. medical information; physical capabilities; intellectual potential). The individual adoptee as a result of historical convention and adoption legislation is denied access to this information (as are his/her adoptive parents) in the developmental stages of his/her life. The legal process of adoption severs the legal bonds between the birth parents and the child and (legally) replaces the birth parents with the adoptive parents. The adoption further prohibits the availability of information across the legal barriers formed. Conventions have interpreted Adoption Acts in the main, as totally prohibiting the opening up of these records, sometimes with tragic results, e.g. where an adoptee (or adoptive parents) urgently require access to birth parents for vital medical information.

In addition to this legal prohibition on information availability, there is considerable variation between adoptive parents, in how they handle the dissemination of information to their adopted children, concerning their adoptive status. Adoptive parents vary in the amount of information they give to their adopted children concerning

adoptive status, from not telling at all, through discussion of some aspects, to complete openness regarding all aspects of adoption. There is evidence (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Raynor, 1980; Picton, 1983) that in some cases adoptees are deeply disturbed by the absence of, or incomplete information about, genealogical origins, whilst others (at least outwardly) seem unaffected by the situation.

Attempts to understand adoptee identity have mostly been framed within developmental theories of identity, particularly that of Erikson (1956, 1959, 1968). However, adoptee identity must also be understood within the framework of theories concerning threats to identity. This is exemplified in the not uncommon situation of an adult adoptee who reaches an 'identity crisis' relatively late in life. This crisis is usually precipitated by the death of adoptive parents; the birth of a child; being told as an adult of adoptive status; etc. The question here, is not how identity is formed, but how the individual copes with a threat or disruption to his/her identity, or with the realisation that his/her identity is inaccurate or incomplete.

#### Identity Disruption-Threat and the Adoptee:

In terms of the two components already mentioned in relation to adoptee identity: historical/genetic/time and alienation/belonging it is clear from the literature that adoption poses a potential threat to the identity of adoptees. The threat for the former comes in the form of lack of information and lack of opportunities to obtain the information. The individual has gaps in the understanding of him/herself, and insufficient information to predict a likely future. Adoptees are also potentially frustrated by their inability to provide even the most basic information about medical and genealogical history for the bureaucracy (e.g. doctors, census collectors). Adoptees are

'transplanted' with little or no information about the best or worst conditions for nurturance, for development, for pre-dispositions. Some adoptees find they need to understand why they were placed for adoption and gain some information about their birth parents and thus themselves.

The threat to the alienation/belonging component of identity comes from the potential lack of complete identification with adoptive parents and grandparents. The knowledge that no matter how close or how loving the adoptive parents are, the adoptee still contains physical parts of their biological parents and ancestors.

Another threat comes in the form of possible or anticipated rejection of the adoptee by the birth parents, first at relinquishment and secondly in seeking contact. Even though recent research (Winkler & van Keppel, 1984) and other publications (e.g. Shawyer, 1979; Ingliss, 1984) demonstrate that most birth parents place their children for adoption out of love and necessity, it is a widespread myth that birth mothers have their baby, give it up, and forget about it. Some examples of the comments of adoptees concerning their birth mother's relinquishment of them follow:

- "When you first hear of it, it is hard to believe it; I felt very bitter and still do. If your own mother did not want you, how can you feel good about yourself or not feel bitter? If my mother had cared she would not have abandoned me, so I must have been unwanted." (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 50).
- "It is my mother who put me up for adoption; it is she who rejected me. She should not have given me away. I cannot understand how a mother can do this sort of thing. I must meet her and find out why she did this to me." (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 111).

- "She must be thinking of me and wondering what happened to me....She must have regrets...I know I couldn't have a child and not think."  
(Triseliotis, 1973, pp. 113 - 114).
- "I felt as if my birth parents weren't even people. I was just brought into this world. Somehow, I was born, and from that point on my adoptive parents took over. It was like my birth parents were fictional people that didn't really exist." (Block, 1981, p. 27).

The alienation problems continue for the adoptee as he/she grows up and realizes, from the negative peer group comments about adoption, and other comments, that adoption is not the preferred way to join a family (Triseliotis, 1973; Block, 1981). Adoptive parents further, often find it difficult to talk about adoption, and in such situations the adoptee learns that adoption must be bad if his/her parents get distressed every time it is mentioned.

The notion that the identity of adoptees is vulnerable as a result of the fact of adoption has much support in the literature. Brinich (1980) considers that adoptees face a double handicap because of their lack of knowledge of origins. The first is that the adoptee may find it difficult to locate his/her own personality within that of the adopted family. The literature points clearly to the need on the part of both adoptees and adoptive parents for there to be perceived similarities between adoptee and adoptive family (e.g. Snow, 1983; Harper, 1986). The second is that the adoptee is likely to experience curiosity about his/her origins, as potentially conflictual and dangerous to his/her place in the adoptive family. This is borne out by the high proportion of adoptees who leave search for birth family until after the death of the adoptive parents (Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Sobol & Cardiff, 1983) and the widespread myth that only adoptees who don't care about their adoptive parents are interested in gaining information about their birth family.

The concept of 'group identity' is important in considering adoption. The adoptee leaves the membership of one group, the birth family (whatever its configuration) without choice; and is placed as a member of a new group, the adoptive family. The fact of adoption, also imposes upon the individual, membership of another group, that of 'adopted person'. Membership of this group is seen by a majority of the population as a 'second class' category of family membership.

#### Factors Related to Adoptee Identity.

Several factors have been identified as being related to Adoptee Identity. These are discussed in the following sections.

##### (a) Self Esteem:

Another difficulty in understanding the nature of adoptee identity has been the confusion of adoptee identity and self esteem. There is a substantial literature which indicates that concerns about identity and feelings of alienation are related to low self esteem (Damon & Hart, 1982; Apter, 1983; Breakwell, 1983a). The qualitative literature on adoptees, also frequently notes that self esteem is associated with concern about the adoptee's identity (Sants, 1964; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1978). The following comments reflect the feelings of adoptees in this area:

- "If your own mother did not want you, how can you feel good about yourself or not feel bitter?" (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 50).
- "I need to justify who I am because I'm very different from my family and I never felt like I was OK for who I am!" (Kowal & Schilling, 1985, p. 361).



- "You are ashamed to tell your girl-friend that you are an adopted child...it is like not being a proper person and you feel humble." (Triseliotis, 1973, pp. 87 -88).
- "...when you [the social worker] sit on the other side of the desk and we sit facing you and you say 'I'm sorry, I can't tell you any more' that cuts deeply; it hurts...You cannot help but say to yourself 'I'm a second class person. I can't be trusted with that kind of information.'." (Clark, 1984, p. 99).

It is clear that these adoptees are expressing their own poor self esteem. Self esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of his/her own worth as a person. James (1892) was one of the first to discuss self esteem. It is now a central focus of research examining personality.

Self esteem has been conceived of as a process of self evaluation. Rosenberg (1965) for example, suggests that the process of evaluating one's worth involves three steps: first the individual selects the dimensions along which he judges himself; second the individual evaluates himself; and third the individual interprets this evaluation in terms of his self worth. It is important to distinguish between the evaluation of one's worth (global self esteem) from one's evaluation of specific abilities or functions. Theorists however, have not been clear in distinguishing between global and specific elements of self esteem. The process of self evaluation is complicated because a person's self evaluations vary considerably in terms of what the person is asked to evaluate. Global self esteem (a person's overall evaluation of himself) is far more stable and resistant to change than specific evaluations (Gruder, Gurwitz & Reiss, 1977).

Hoge & McCarthy (1984) examined the concept of identity salience as a way of linking specific self-evaluation to global self-evaluation. They further differentiated

between group and individual identity salience in their sample of 1,528 adolescent school children. They found to their surprise, that group identity salience was more important than individual identity salience in understanding how specific self evaluations influence global self esteem. Their results also suggested that the summation of specific dimensions of self evaluation do not equate with global self esteem.

The self esteem research suffers from three major difficulties: first, there is little consensus on definition; second, there are a diverse range of measurement procedures; and finally, there are frequently weak (or non existent) correlations between indicators (Demo, 1985).

There are many self esteem measures of variable quality. Fleming and Courtney (1984) caution against defining self esteem too broadly, and conclude that many measures developed measure more than self esteem. An example of such a measure is Fitts's (1965) Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) which contains not only self acceptance items but also self identity and behaviour items. On the other hand Self Esteem measures such as Coopersmith's (1967) Self Esteem Inventory, and Rosenberg's (1965) Self Esteem Scale are concerned primarily with the evaluation of self worth. Demo (1985) in his review of the literature of self esteem measures found that very little attention had been paid to measurement problems. In examining eight measures of self esteem he hoped to provide preliminary validation evidence for the measures. Confirmatory factor analyses substantiated the validity of the Rosenberg (1965) and Coopersmith (1967) measures.

Some researchers have used the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) (Fitts, 1965) to measure adoptee identity (Aumend & Barrett, 1984; Jeffries-Kline, 1984) without clearly defining what they mean by 'identity' and assuming that the TSCS scales of identity will measure whatever it is that the adoptees are describing. Jeffries-Kline (1984)

however, in discussing her results, concluded that the TSCS was measuring different aspects of identity than those to which adoptee identity relates. This conclusion certainly has face validity on the basis of the anecdotal evidence available, but needs to be further examined.

The qualitative literature suggests that it is likely that adoptees without a sense of biological rootedness, and who do not have a sense of belonging with their contemporaries, will also have low self esteem (Sants, 1964; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978). The converse: that adoptees with high self esteem would have a sense of belonging both in biological time and with their peers is implied. These relationships have however, not been the subject of close investigation and are likely to be complex.

#### (b) Decision to Search;

There is considerable analysis in the adoption literature of the adoptee's decision to search for biological family. The analysis involves questions such as: who searches?; when do they search?; who do they search for?; what are their expectations?; and what are the effects of the search and contact? This discussion is fuelled by the policy question of legalising access to information (Triseliotis, 1973; Eldred, Rosenthal, Wander, Kety, Schulsinger, Welner & Jacobsen, 1976; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Aumend & Barrett, 1984).

Over the past fifteen years the adoptee's right and/or need to search, has been discussed within the general community with the result that some governments have changed adoption legislation to permit such access; e.g. Scotland, England, Finland, Israel, Victoria, Western Australia, and New Zealand. Adoptees claim that in being denied access to their original birth certificates they are denied access to vital personal information, and treated as children. On the other hand, claims are made that such

access will badly affect birth mothers; have the potential to hurt adoptees (mainly via those who do not know they are adopted finding out); and hurt adoptive families. The research, however, does not support these arguments (Triseliotis, 1973, 1980; Picton & Bieske-Vos, 1980; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Winkler & van Keppel, 1984; Winkler, Midford, van Keppel, Zubrick, & Moses, 1986; Slaytor, 1986). Rather, the research suggests that the majority of birth mothers want (as a minimum) to know if their child is alive, and happy; very few totally reject contact (Picton & Bieske-Vos, 1980; Winkler & van Keppel, 1984; Dees, 1986; Adoption Information Service, Department for Community Services, Victoria, 1986). Similarly the research and case examples suggest that adoptee's relationships with their adoptive parents are enhanced, not harmed, by contact (Winkler, Midford, van Keppel, Zubrick, & Moses, 1986; Slaytor, 1986). The question of potential hurt to adoptees is more complex. So few studies have attempted to include a complete cross section of the adoptee population that very little is known about adoptees other than those who search. More research is required. Meanwhile the push to change legislation proceeds.

The available evidence (Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Kowal & Schilling, 1985) suggests that the type of adoptee who searches is one who is most usually:

- (a) female;
- (b) an only adopted child;
- (c) reports a late or traumatic revelation of adoption;
- (d) has little early information about birth circumstances and family;
- (e) has recently experienced marriage, pregnancy, birth of a child, or death of an adoptive parent.

It is a minority of adoptees, however, who actually search for their birth family. Triseliotis (1980) puts the

level at only one percent of all adoptees. There is more recent evidence from Victoria (McPhee, 1986) that the percentage in Australia may be significantly higher, although why this is so is as yet unexplained. The following are some comments which reflect the feelings of adoptees who decide to search:

- "There comes a time when your need to know your own identity and heritage overcomes all other issues, and you begin to search for yourself." (Lenne, 1980, p. 12).
- "The day I found my birth mother was the day that the void in me was filled." (Kowal & Schilling, 1985, p. 360).
- "I grew up within an adoptive family where there was a conspiracy of silence which I respected; but that did not stop me from asking those vital questions: What did she look like? What is she doing? What kind of country did she come from?" (Clark, 1984, p. 98).
- "I didn't want to do any damage to anyone else. I thought if I started digging up things somebody might be hurt; it could be me; it could be somebody else; in the end I couldn't leave it any longer and I simply had to find out." (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 94).
- "Deep need each year becoming more urgent, at first selfish, I needed to know about me for my sake, then I wanted to find her for her sake, my children were growing and she'd lose the opportunity to see in part the child she'd relinquished." (Slaytor, 1986, p. 17).

The lack of a sense of biological rootedness appears from these comments to be the major impetus which leads an adoptee to search for birth family.

While the decision to search is made by a minority of adoptees (Triseliotis, 1980), it is not clear from the literature what differentiates those adoptees who search from those who do not. The main problem <sup>is</sup> being that the ~~majority~~ <sup>most</sup> of research on adoptees has involved adoptees searching or post reunion, who statistically comprise a minority group of adoptees (1 to 5 percent of the total adoptee population). Research with non searching samples of adoptees is necessary.

#### (c) Relationship With Adoptive Parents:

In the case of adoption it is apparent that many adoptees view themselves as different to their adoptive parents in many ways; it is thus likely that this dissimilarity will pose a potential threat to the adoptee as a member of the family group. Raynor (1980) found in a retrospective study of adopted children and their families that even a small likeness perceived by adoptive parents assisted them to feel the child belonged in the family; perceived similarities were associated with successful placement. While it is difficult to determine cause and effect in a retrospective study, the Raynor result suggests that perceived similarity would be an important contributor to adoptee identity formation.

The adoptee's relationship with his/her adoptive parents has been examined, mostly retrospectively, in several studies of adoptees (Jaffe & Fanshell, 1970; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1976; Raynor, 1980; Kowal & Schilling, 1985). Particular issues such as at what age they informed their adopted children of their adoptive status; how they were told; problems encountered in child rearing and management; and failed adoptions; have been identified as being related to the relationship between the adoptee and the adoptive parents.

Adoptee's statements which reflect their feelings about their adoptive parents follow:

- "She told me I was a bastard and that I was born in the poor house. If I wanted my birth lines I could go and enquire there." (Triseliotis, 1973, p. 30)
- "They treated me well and I was happy with them. Everything has gone fine for me so there is nothing more to say. I am not bothered by my background - Mum and Dad are my parent's and that's that." (Raynor, 1980, p. 53).
- "I always felt different. I thought if this 'chosen child' stuff is so wonderful, then why won't my parents ever talk about it? Maybe it's bad?" (Jeffries-Kline, 1984, p. 152).
- "Because I felt chosen all my life I felt good about myself." (Jeffries-Kline, 1984, p. 147).
- "My adoptive father, when told I had found my mother, was absolutely delighted; and very proud that I had complimented him so highly by sharing the knowledge with him. There are no shadows now between us as there were all my life. What a waste of years and living all the secrecy has cost me and all my parents." (Lenne, 1980, p. 13).
- "I loved my adoptive parents. They both died and have been gone a long time but I loved them immensely and chose to never do anything until they died because I did not dare risk hurting them. I could not take that chance. They were too precious to me." (Clark, 1984, p.97).
- "One of the main difficulties was trying to find everything I wanted to know without upsetting too many people, that is, I had Mum and Dad's feelings to consider, and also I had to consider the feelings of my natural mother whose past I was delving into." (Slaytor, 1986, p. 18).

It is generally accepted that a 'bond' exists between a parent and a child, despite the lack of a satisfactory definition of this bond (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979; Harper, 1986). Two major dimensions emerge consistently in theoretical conceptualizations of parent-child relationships: these are acceptance-rejection and control-autonomy (Mussen, Conger & Kagan, 1974). It is reasonable to predict that as the adoptive family structure mirrors the biologically occurring family, so will the relationships developed within the structure, i.e. adoptive parents develop a 'bond' with their adopted child, and this bond is similar to that developed when a child is raised by its birth parents.

Studies which have examined the impact of adoption on the emotional life of families have varied considerably in their conclusions. Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) conclude that the successful outcome of most adoptions imply that adoption alone makes no difference to the kind of relationships which develop in the family. On the other hand the disproportionate representation of adopted children in psychiatric and guidance clinics (Schechter, 1960; Toussieng, 1962; Swender & Hartenstein, 1979) leads to the conclusion that adoption must affect the parent-child relationship.

In the majority of studies ~~in~~ adoption, the parent-child relationship between the adoptive parent(s) and the adoptee has been examined retrospectively, and rarely with a representative sample of all adoptive families.

Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) found in their study of 100 adoptive parents questioned retrospectively about their adopted children, that a significant number of the adoptees had had moderate to severe difficulties while growing up. They draw particular attention to the fundamental differences experienced by adoptive families; particularly to the complex identity problems of the adoptee; and to the adoptive parents vulnerability to potential stress



unique to the adoptive parent role (e.g. telling the child it is adopted, dealing with the adoptees identity resolution).

The National Children's Bureau as part of its National Child Development Study (Seglow, Pringle & Wedge, 1972) studied adopted children and their families as part of the larger study. They found that by age 7, the adopted children had overcome their earlier handicap of illegitimacy and were achieving more academically and had better adjustment than the illegitimate children (of the same age) kept by their mothers; and further, compared favourably with peers in the general population. They also found that nearly 90 percent of the families at interview time could be considered to be "reasonably happy, normal and balanced", only 14 percent were "suffering strains and tensions which were causing them anxiety and concern for what the future might hold." (p. 122). Pringle (1972b) commenting on the results of the above research makes that the point, that just as there are few yardsticks to assess the outcome of ordinary family life, there are also few for adoptive families. Nonetheless the researchers attempted a subjective assessment and found that the great majority of adoptive families were meeting the needs of their adopted children satisfactorially at approximately nine years of age. Similarly the vast majority of the adoptive parents felt that the adoption had worked out well.

Raynor (1980) interviewed retrospectively 160 sets of adoptive parents and over 100 of their children. She found that those adoptive parents who felt they had a close relationship with their child, even during adolescence and adulthood, less often had a child with problems. Further, that where there had been an atmosphere of well being and security in the home, the children had very much fewer behaviour problems than where there had been conflict, anxiety or insecurity in the home. She also found a high degree of agreement between adoptive parents and adoptees on the satisfaction with the adoption. While the

assessments varied between families, it was clear that an adoption did not have to be perfect to be seen as satisfying. It was also found to the surprise of Raynor that adoptive parents frequently had very high expectations of their adopted children, often unreasonably so; and adoptees tended to view problems within the family as being their responsibility.

Picton and Bieske-Vos (1980) reviewing the available literature on the relationship between adoptive parents and adoptees conclude that an open and sharing attitude "increases the likelihood of building up a secure and loving relationship in which they quickly become the child's psychological parent" (p. 10). In fact the overwhelming evidence shows that such a relationship will endure and grow whether or not the adoptee decides to seek out birth family. (Kadushin, 1970; Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1978).

#### (d) Age and Manner of Adoption Disclosure:

Current practice is to tell adopted children that they are adopted; this is in contrast to early this century when adoptive parents were often advised not to tell children that they were adopted (Brodzinsky, Braff & Singer, 1980; Raynor, 1980; Picton & Bieske-Vos, 1980; Jeffries-Kline, 1984). Attempts to deny the reality and difference of the adopted status of their children often produce anxieties and fears of the truth being discovered in the adoptive parents; this denial of the facts can result in feelings of mistrust, suspicion, and anger on the part of the adoptee on learning the truth (Swender & Hartenstein, 1979). In the 1940's adoption workers began to advise early telling, because so many adoptees were traumatised by unfortunate revelations (Jeffries-Kline, 1984).

However, there is controversy in the literature over when and how to tell children of their adoptive status. It is widely recognized by adoption theorists and researchers, that the adoption revelation is a very difficult process for both parents and children (Kirk, 1964; Kadushin, 1974). The critical issues being WHAT information should be given and WHEN it should be presented. Brodzinsky, Pappas, Singer, & Braff (1981) claim that the focus in addressing these issues has been directed primarily on the emotional impact of adoption information, with little attention given to the cognitive factors involved in the telling process. They state that "it would seem obvious that children's understanding of adoption is likely to undergo significant developmental changes" (p 178). Thus, adequate telling of adoptive status needs to take into account the child's cognitive level. In a study of 60 non adopted children ranging from 6 to 17 years they found very clear developmental trends in the children's perceptions of adoption. At the youngest age level few children differentiated adoption from birth, or understood anything of the adoption process or motives. With increasing age, children were more likely to focus on complex, abstract, and future oriented motives (e.g the desire of the birth mother to provide a better future for the child; the role of the adoption agency; the infertility of the adoptive parents). Although this study revealed clear age related changes in non adopted children's adoption knowledge, caution needs to be taken in generalizing to adopted children. The adopted child is emotionally involved in the process and does not have the freedom to intellectually abstract the concepts like the non adopted child.

Brodzinsky, Braff & Singer (1980) claim that adoptive parents over estimation of children's adoption knowledge can be an important factor in the adoptees' adjustment to his/her adoption. If parents believe their child understands what adoption means, they may be less likely to discuss it further and less sensitive to cues from the

child regarding adoption. The child can experience a sense of confusion or bewilderment in the absence of subsequent discussion, which if not resolved could result in emotional disturbance. They suggest that the manner and timing of adoption revelation must be based on a philosophy that takes account of the qualitative changes that occur in the development of knowledge. In addition, Pringle (1972a) warns that the 'once and for all talk' is not enough but rather there should be continuing explanations and discussions, which have to become increasingly sophisticated as the child grows older.

Another aspect of telling which has been raised is the difficulty experienced by adoptive parents in communicating this information to their adopted children (Schwartz, 1975; Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1975; Brodzinsky, Braff & Singer, 1980). As Jeffries-Kline (1984) points out, the parents are told to make the child their own in every way, and at the same time tell the child of being born to other parents. This embodies a logical inconsistency for both adoptive parents and adoptee. Brodzinsky, Braff & Singer (1980) point out that while young adopted children may readily accept their parent's assurance that they are family members, it is quite possible that as they become cognitively more mature, children may become confused or upset, questioning to whom they belong - birth or adoptive family.

The "chosen baby" is probably the most often used technique but there is evidence that it can have a detrimental effect on the child, because he/she may feel under some stress that if he/she doesn't please the adoptive parents he/she may be rejected a second time; the first time being at relinquishment (Toussieng, 1962; Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1978). Schwartz (1975) states that while in early childhood the adoptee accepts the special label in a positive sense; in later childhood the adoptee frequently develops new and different perceptions of adoption and even anxieties about the implications of

being an adoptee. In his analysis of 44 adoptive families seen as part of his pediatric practice over a two-year period, Schwartz found that 28 adoptees had on-going concerns and unanswered questions regarding their adoption. In 22 of these cases, the adoptive parents had no knowledge of their child's question's. Schwartz

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concluded that the children knew or sensed their parent's discomfort in discussing adoption and did not question them. Such adoptive parents could erroneously conclude that their child was unconcerned about their adoptive status.

Not all adoptees, of course, learn of their adoptive status from their adoptive parents. Triseliotis (1973) found that if telling of adoptive status was left beyond ten years of age the greatest probability was that the child would find out from sources outside the adoptive family. In his study of 68 adoptees, Triseliotis found that 38 found out from someone outside the family. This is reflected in other studies (Eldred, Rosenthal, Wender, Kety, Schulsinger, Welner, & Jacobsen, 1976; Thompson, Webber, Stoneman, & Harrison, 1978). Is it only searching adoptees who are not told by adoptive parents? Why is it that some adoptive parents find it so difficult to tell their adopted children that they are adopted? Picton and Bieske-Vos (1980) suggest that some adoptive parents fear that their adopted child's interest in their birth parents indicates a rejection of the adoptive family. Adoptees are quick to pick up this fear from their parents. Research evidence however indicates that the adoptee's relationship with the adoptive parents is at no risk from such curiosity (e.g. Sorosky, Baron & Pannor, 1978; Picton & Bieske-Vos, 1980; Sobol & Cardiff, 1983; Winkler, Midford, van Keppel, Zubrick, & Moses, 1986; Slaytor, 1986). That is adoptees in very large numbers view their adoptive parents to be their parents, and their birth parents to be more like a friend, aunt/uncle or other relative but NOT a replacement for the adoptees' adoptive parents.

Triseliotis (1973) found that two thirds of adoptees searching came to know of their adoption when over eleven years of age. He further found that adoptees told when younger than eleven, were more satisfied than those told after ten. In fact revelation after ten "had a stunning effect, shaking their entire life and self image, leaving most of them confused and bewildered." (p 20). Triseliotis states that the most important component of telling is the capacity of the parent's to provide a loving and secure environment which encourages confidence and self esteem in the adoptee.

Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) in their follow-up examination of 100 people adopted in New York found that overall 83 were told of adoptive status by adoptive parents; 4 were never told; and 11 were told by someone else. They found from interviews with the adoptive parents, that the reported subsequent adjustment of the adoptees did not appear to be related to their age at initial revelation, but to the manner of being told.

Aumend & Barrett (1984) found a trend for adoptees who were not searching for birth parents, to have been told of their adoptive status earlier, and from their adoptive parents; while adoptees searching tended to have been told later, and less frequently by adoptive parents.

In contrast, Sobol and Cardiff (1983) in their study of 120 searching and non-searching adoptees in Canada, found two factors which predicted searching behaviour in the adoptee: searching adoptees tended to remember more of the initial adoption revelation; and have more negative early feelings about being adopted than non-searching adoptees. Contrary to other research findings they found that the adoptees age when told of his/her adoptive status, the closeness of the relationship with the person who revealed adoptive status (e.g. parent, friend, stranger); and the psychological atmosphere at the revelation; did not predict searching behaviour in adoptees. This study was

small and so generalization requires caution. These unusual results do however point to the complex nature of the relationships concerned.

It is clear from the research literature that the telling of adoptive status is a significant event for adoptees. Factors which have been identified (e.g. Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975; Raynor, 1980) as being important predictors of adoptee problems include the following:

1. The age at which the adoptee was told of his/her adoptive status.
2. The manner in which the adoptee was told of his/her adoptive status.
3. The nature of the relationship between the adoptee and his/her adoptive parents.

The problems referred to involve behaviour problems (particularly in adolescence); adoption breakdown; problems at school; psychiatric disorders; and psychological problems. The literature has revealed that these predictors (age at, and manner of revelation; and the relationship with adoptive parents) are related to searching behaviour in adoptees, which in turn are related to identity issues for adoptees. The question to be answered is do the problems result from the lack of identity or from the wider manifestations of the relationship with adoptive parents including the facts of adoption disclosure.

#### The Rationale for this Study:

The confusion which exists in the adoption literature is in part caused by the confusion of terminology and concepts used. Further, while it is well known that a proportion of adoptees experience difficulties in their lives as a result of the fact of adoption, there are no

conclusive explanations for why this is so. That is, why do some adoptees experience great distress, while others seem totally unconcerned about their adoptive status? How do the variables, such as decision to search; relationship with adoptive parents; circumstances of being told of adoptive status; and self esteem; interact with each other and with an adoptee's sense of his/her own identity?

At present there are two major stances in the examination of these concepts. The first is supported by the work of Sants (1964), Triseliotis (1973), Sorosky, Baron and Pannor (1975), and Richards (1979) and contends that adoptee identity problems result from the adoptees broken links with their genealogical history. The second is supported by the work of Bohman (1970), Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) and Raynor (1980) and holds that adoptee identity problems stem from immediate life circumstances, and family problems.

#### Defining the Components of Adoptee Identity

Two components of adoptee identity have already been identified from the literature:

1. Biological Identity is defined as the adoptees sense of belonging in biological time.
2. Alienation is defined as the adoptees sense of belonging with others.

Two further components can be postulated here. They are based on the literature, clinical contact with adoptees (individually and in groups), and from on going research. They overlap but the distinctions appear potentially important to adoptees. These two components are:

3. Curiosity about biological origins which is defined as the adoptees interest in obtaining information about biological origins.



There is general consensus in the literature that a small proportion of adoptees are very curious about their beginnings, whilst the majority appear to have low, or non existent levels of curiosity. The assumption is that those adoptees who search are curious, and that thus, those who do, not are not curious. The questions which seem important to the adoptees studied, concern the circumstances of their birth; the reasons for their relinquishment; and the physical similarities between them and members of their birth family. Adoptees who search overtly demonstrate this curiosity. However most studies have examined adoptees who search, and have not addressed the question of whether there are differences between adoptees who search and those who do not search. The samples used in the studies have thus not been representative of the entire population of adoptees. It is thus unwise to assume that adoptees who do not search are not curious about their beginnings and ancestry.

The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies (1980) in their booklet "A Guide for Adoptive Parents: Explaining Adoption." state that adopted children vary in how much curiosity they show regarding their adoption and background. This curiosity is seen as normal and even usual. They add however that "it is the unanswered questions, a feeling of mystery, which provoke undue curiosity." (p 16). In another Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies publication "Child Adoption", Rowe states simply that all adoptees have some curiosity, tending to be more interested in information (relating to themselves as individuals, and reasons for relinquishment) rather than in meeting birth parents.

Slaytor (1986) found in her study of 74 adoptees who were known to have had a reunion, and posted a questionnaire via Adoption Triangle N.S.W., that over

fifty percent used the word 'curiosity' in describing the aim of their search and reunion.

Adoptee curiosity is conceptualised as being more of a behavioural aspect of adoptee identity. It is more specifically related to gaining information about origins rather than being concerned with understanding one's own sense of self.

4. Concern about Biological Identity which is defined as the importance attached to Biological Identity by the adoptee.

Some adoptees seem unconcerned about their lack of knowledge of origins; i.e. for them having a sense of belonging in biological time is unimportant. For others biological identity is considered to be very important. Thus another potential component of adoptee identity is the importance an adoptee attaches to their sense of belonging in biological time. Kornitzer

(1971) suggests that the majority of adoptees care about their biological identity to some extent. Raynor (1980) in his study of 160 adoptive families which had adopted a child between 1948 and 1953 in England and Wales, found that adoptees interest in genealogical information varied from no interest to considerable interest. It is clear from the literature concerning adoptee interest in searching for birth family that there is variation between adoptees on overt (at least) concern about biological identity. Adoptees who search for birth family indicate frequently that they are searching for personal identity (Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975; Kowal & Schilling, 1985). It is obvious that many of those who search are concerned about biological identity. It is assumed by others (e.g. Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Raynor, 1980) that the reverse is also true. That is that those who do not search are not concerned about biological

identity. This is not necessarily so, but the question requires empirical investigation. Rowe in the Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies publication "Child Adoption" states that many, if not most, adoptees even when happily adopted, appear to go through a period of turmoil when they are interested and concerned about their origins, but this can vary considerably.

#### Multifactorial Conception of Adoptee Identity:

Adoptee Identity for this study is thus defined as being comprised of at least four components. These have been identified from the literature and elsewhere as being: sense of belonging in time; concern about belonging in time; curiosity about biological origins; and sense of belonging-alienation. These four components are likely to be highly related to each other. All these components need to be examined individually and in relation to each other.

#### Towards A Theoretical Model: Credulous and Sceptical

There are two alternative models of adoptee identity which can be identified in the adoption literature. The first model, which I will call the Credulous Model views biological identity (and thus concerns about it) as being the necessary precursor of the adoptee's self esteem, sense of belonging-alienation and subsequent decision to search. This model conceptualises an adoptee's poor sense of identity, as being the result of both ignorance of biological origins and relationship problems with adoptive family; this poor sense of identity then results in feelings of alienation and low self esteem in the individual adoptee.

The second model, which I will call the Sceptical Model, views biological identity as being simply one of the many results of the combined influences of the individual's relationship with adoptive parents, self esteem, and sense of belonging-alienation. This model conceptualises poor biological identity as the end result of poor relationships with adoptive parents, low self esteem and alienation.

The two models comprise the same components in similar configuration. There are two fundamental differences between the models. The first difference, and I suggest the major difference, is that in the sceptical model biological identity is an outcome of self esteem and alienation; while in the credulous model biological identity is a determinant of self esteem and alienation. The second difference, concerns the capacity for change over time. In the sceptical model biological identity is a static concept; whereas in the credulous model biological identity is a dynamic concept.

The role and effects of biological identity viewed from the different models are thus fundamentally different. In the sceptical model biological identity is an outcome of general rather than specific psychological processes; it is thus a generic problem, where poor relationships with adoptive parents, a poor childhood, low self esteem and a sense of alienation get transferred to biological identity. In the credulous model, biological discontinuity can lead to a poor sense of biological identity. This poor biological identity can then put an adoptee at potential risk and affect self esteem and alienation.

Some of the implications of these differences can be summarized as follows:

1. In the case of searching adoptees, the credulous model contends that a change in biological identity should change other things, such as self esteem and alienation. In the sceptical model a change in biological identity would not affect alienation and self esteem.

- 2 In the sceptical model search can be misplaced. The adoptee may perceive a need to search to find answers, only to discover after contact that it has not changed things for the adoptee. This is because rather than a specific problem, in this conceptualization biological identity is a generic problem. In the case of the credulous model search and answers should change biological identity and thus modify other variables that result from it.
3. If biological identity is a static component (as postulated in the sceptical model) then understanding biological identity, and being able to measure it would enable the assignment of adoptees to stable categories. These categories would be useful in research, in therapeutic work with adoptees and their families, and in planning services. On the other hand if biological identity is dynamic and interactive then being able to understand and measure it would permit investigation of the interactive effects of these variables. A dynamic biological identity would mean that intervention and individual growth and change was possible.

It will facilitate study of the relationships between these variables to define the components of the theoretical models and then represent these in diagrammatic form.

#### The Theoretical Constructs:

##### 1. Adoptee Identity:

Biological Identity (BI): the sense of belonging in biological time. (Concern about Biological Identity and Curiosity about Biological Origins are expected to correlate highly and are thus at this stage subsumed under Biological Identity.)

Alienation (A): the sense of belonging with others.

## 2. Factors Which Relate to Adoptee Identity:

There are obviously other factors which have the potential to relate to an adoptee's identity. Those which are believed to be theoretically relevant are outlined below:

Self Esteem (SE): "on the whole I am satisfied with myself" (Rosenberg, 1965).

Relationship with Adoptive Parents (RAD): the quality of the adoptee's relationship with his/her adoptive parents.

Telling: The circumstances of being told of adoptive status are made up of age told, manner told and opportunities for subsequent discussion. It is logical that these variables would affect, as well as be affected by the relationship between the adoptee and the adoptive parents, but there are also suggestions from the literature that these could affect Biological Identity directly. Telling for the models, thus encompasses age told, manner told and opportunities for discussion.

Information on Biological Origins (Info on BO):

Adoptees vary considerably in the quantity of information known by them concerning their biological origins. This can vary from no information to complete information.

Decision to Search (DTS): The adoptees desire to search for information about, or to make contact with, members of birth family. Adoptees are generally categorized into those interested in searching, those who are searching but are as yet unsuccessful, those who have had contact and those not interested.

Significant Life Events (SLE): Significant life events in adoptees lives have been identified as birth of a child, death of adoptive parents, and marriage, to name a few. It is known from the literature that adoptees attribute search to the influence of such life events.

Discussion of Constructs:

The two models proposed are based on the literature as previously discussed. The relationships are stated simplistically; it is realised that there are other variables to be accommodated but the basic relationships are outlined in order to test them.

Other factors such as sex and age of adoptee will need to be examined separately. That is, it is intended that these factors will be applied separately to the models as proposed. The literature suggests that males are more vulnerable than females to both poor relationships with adoptive parents and peers, and are represented in larger numbers than females in presenting with psychological, psychiatric, vocational, and educational problems. However, the literature suggests that more females search than males. The literature also indicates that there are crisis periods in adoptees lives which are partially related to age issues. Age as a factor in identity therefore also needs to be analysed.

### Model 1: Credulous Model

The credulous model holds that Biological Identity results from the relationships which the adoptee has with his/her adoptive parents; the age and manner of adoption disclosure; and the level of information the adoptee has about his/her origins. The Biological Identity so formed, in turn generates the levels of self esteem and alienation within the individual adoptee. These in turn combine to precipitate in the adoptee a decision to search (or not to search) for members of his/her birth family. Decision to search is also affected by significant life events. A feedback loop is instituted if a decision to search is made because a change in the level of information about origins modifies the individual's perception of his/her biological identity and thus also the self esteem and alienation of the adoptee. Thus an adoptee's perception of his/her biological identity is a response to both family relationships and information known of biological origins. The Biological Identity so formed in turn produces the individual adoptee's self esteem and alienation.

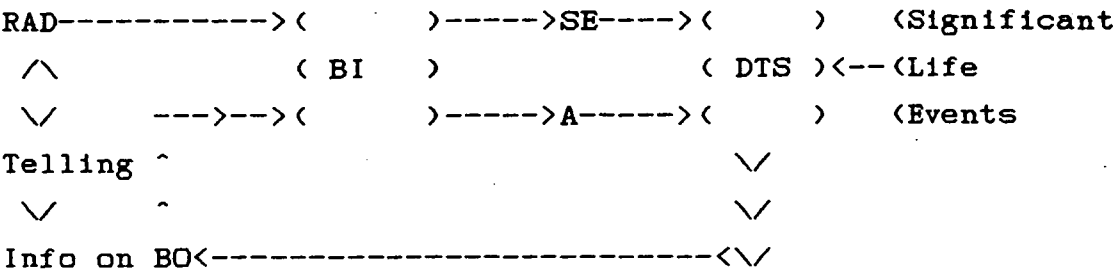
### Model 2: Sceptical Model

The sceptical model holds that the adoptees relationship with his/her adoptive parents; the age and manner of adoption revelation; the level of information the adoptee has about his/her origins; and significant life events combine to produce in the adoptee levels of self esteem and alienation. Biological Identity is a result of the self esteem and alienation so formed. Further biological identity itself precipitates the decision or not to search in the adoptee. Thus the sceptical model views biological identity as the end product of many influences and factors.



Diagrammatic Representation: Credulous Model.

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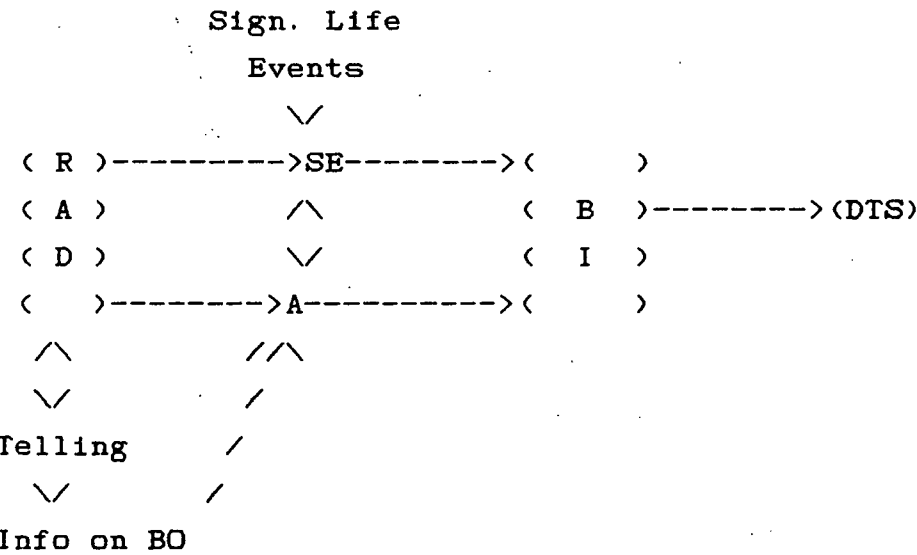


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Diagrammatic Representation: Sceptical Model.

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### Investigation of Theoretical Models:

To investigate these models the first requirement is to have a reliable and valid measure of the theoretical components.

To construct a measure of biological identity the first step after developing a theoretical framework of adoptee identity based on the literature, is to identify the elements of adoptee identity from the literature. The review of the literature in this study has isolated the potential elements as biological identity; curiosity about biological origins; concern with biological identity; and alienation. Other factors such as self esteem, circumstances of being told, information about biological origins, relationship with adoptive parents and decision to search have also been identified as being related to adoptee identity.

It is beyond the scope of this research project to examine the models in total. The investigation will examine the overall structure of the two models, but will be unable to address whether Biological Identity is an outcome or determinant of Self Esteem and Alienation. That is the examination of the models will involve the investigation of whether age and manner of disclosure of adoptive status, and relationships with adoptive parents affect levels of Biological Identity. Further whether decision to search can be predicted from levels of Biological Identity. And finally whether Biological Identity and Self Esteem are directly related or not.

The overall objectives of this thesis are to:

- (1) Develop identity measures relevant to adult adoptees;
- (2) Investigate the relationships between the variables identified as relevant to adoptee identity.

The Tasks of this Thesis can be summarized as follows:

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A. Development of a model of adoptee identity

development and change. This has been undertaken in the preceeding pages. Concepts of adoptee identity and identification of the sub-components of that identity have been outlined. Two models of adoptee identity have been postulated: the credulous model and the sceptical model.

B. A measure of adoptee identity will be developed based on these concepts.

C. Examination of the relationship between adoptee identity and the following variables:

(i) Decision to Search.

It is hypothesized that those adoptees who have decided to search for member(s) of birth family will have less sense of belonging in biological time than those who have decided not to search. That is adoptees who decide to search will score lower on the biological identity scale of the adoptee identity measure than those adoptees who have decided not to search.

(ii) Self Esteem.

a). It is hypothesized that those adoptees who have decided to search will have lower self esteem than those adoptees who have decided not to search.

b). It is hypothesized that those adoptees who have lower self esteem will have less sense of belonging in biological time (viz. a lower score on the biological identity scale of the adoptee identity measure) than those adoptees with higher self esteem.

(iii) Age and Manner of Adoption Disclosure.

(a). It is hypothesized that adoptees who were told of their adoptive status after age 10 will be more likely, than adoptees told earlier, to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

(b). It is hypothesized that adoptees who were told of their adoptive status in a hateful manner will be more likely, than adoptees told in a loving manner, to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

(c). It is hypothesized that adoptees who were told of their adoptive status accidentally, will be more likely, than those told by plan, to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

(iv) Relationship with Adoptive Parents. It is

hypothesized that those adoptees with a poor relationship with adoptive parents will have a lower sense of belonging in biological time (viz. score lower on the biological identity scale of the adoptee identity measure) than those adoptees who have a good relationship with adoptive parents.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHOD

## METHOD

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### Stages of Test Construction:

The procedures necessary to construct a psychometric test have been outlined comprehensively by Crocker and Algina (1986; p. 66). They outline ten necessary steps in test construction:

1. Identify the primary purpose(s) for which the test scores will be used.
2. Identify behaviours that represent the construct, or define the domain.
3. Prepare a set of test specifications, delineating the proportion of items that should focus on each type of behaviour identified in Step 2.
4. Construct an initial pool of items.
5. Have items reviewed (and revise as necessary).
6. Hold preliminary item try outs (and revise as necessary).
7. Field test the items on a large sample representative of the subject population for whom the test is intended.
8. Determine the statistical properties of item scores, and when appropriate, eliminate items that do not meet pre-established criteria.
9. Design and conduct reliability and validity studies for the final form of the test.
10. Develop guidelines for administration, scoring, and interpretation of the test scores (e.g. prepare norm tables, suggest recommended cutting scores or standards of performance, etc.)

### Overview of Three Stages of Research Project:

This research project was planned in three stages. Study one, encompassing Steps 1 through 6 of the Crocker & Algina (1986) framework, was primarily the development of

adoptive identity items, via discussion groups and the factor analysis of a self administered questionnaire completed by 87 adult adoptees. Study two, encompassing Steps 7 through 9 of the Crocker & Algina (1986) framework, was firstly the production of a multi-factorial adoptive identity psychometric test from the pool of adoptive identity items generated from Study one, which was subsequently given via questionnaire to 1,896 adoptees. Study three encompassing Step 10 of the Crocker & Algina (1986) framework, examined the relationships between the identity measures and self esteem; adoptive decision to search for birth family; relationship with adoptive parents; and age and manner told of adoptive status.

#### STUDY 1a:

##### Discussion Groups:

Four groups of adult adoptees met for group discussion of what they considered were the important constructs of adoptive identity. Groups of 6 - 8 adoptees met for approximately three hours each. The groups were formed with assistance from Adoption Jigsaw WA which recruited the subjects from its membership. It was thus recognized that the groups disproportionally represented adoptees interested in search. In view of the theoretical position that adoptees interested in search are more likely, than those not interested in search, to have greater concern for biological identity, this was not considered to be inappropriate. The groups met in 1983/1984.

##### Development of Identity Items:

Three techniques were used to broaden, refine and verify the constructs of adoptive identity. These were content analysis (via the discussion groups), plus review of the available research, and expert judgment (Crocker &

Algina, 1986). The aim of these groups was to understand more about the nature of the sense of biological identity/rootedness held by adoptees; that is to identify behaviours which represent the constructs of adoptee identity. The group members discussed Biological Identity and what it meant to them as adoptees; the key features of Biological Identity; the level of concern for Biological Identity; the effects of poor Biological Identity; their attitude to other people; the importance to them of their adoptive parents; and the relevance to them of their birth parents. Detailed notes of these groups were made and were used to produce statements which reflected the feelings of the adoptees in the groups. These statements were reviewed in light of the literature review and expert judgment, and 25 test items were produced.

These 25 items comprised a pool of items developed to measure adoptee identity. A five point Likert item format was selected.

Roid (1984) recommends four steps in the process of writing items, these are: review of the existing research on the components in the construct domain prior to item writing; drafting the items; field testing to identify flaws and to assess the dimensions (or lack of them) underlying item performance; and revision and extension of items to meet the needs suggested by the research and data analysis. These steps were followed in the item writing and subsequent testing in Stage Ib.

These 25 items were then categorized on the basis of face validity into four sub-categories: biological identity; alienation; concern; and curiosity (see Appendix 1).

#### STUDY Ib:

Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc. (Jigsaw WA) and the Adoption Research and Counselling Service (ARCS) organized a joint research project to examine adoptee reunion, mediation, and



related issues. It was decided to use this research project as a means to pilot test the 25 adoptee identity items generated from the group discussions.

### Subjects:

Eighty seven adult adoptees who were affiliated with Jigsaw WA and whom Jigsaw WA knew to have had a reunion with a member (or members) of their birth family, comprised the subject group. It was recognized from the outset that the sample was not representative of the general population of adoptees. The sample was one of convenience.

Table 1  
Study 1b- Demographic Information

Sex:	Male = 21; Female = 66; Total = 87
Ethnic Background:	Australian = 72; European = 7;
	Other = 8
Marital Status:	Single = 14; Married = 54;
	Sep/Divorced = 13; Widowed = 1;
	De Facto = 5
Occupation:	Home Duties = 33; Unskilled = 1;
	Semi Skilled = 22; Manag./Prof. = 21;
	Unemployed/Student = 9

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### Questionnaire:

*Moz*  
The majority of the questionnaire was produced for the ARCS/Jigsaw WA study. The sections of the Questionnaire which were relevant to this research project were:

- Q1 - 8      Demographics.
- Q9 - 11     Information about Origins prior to search:
- age when placed for adoption.
  - who arranged adoption.
  - did adoptive parents know or meet birth parent(s).
- Q12         25 adoptee identity items.
- Q13 - 22    Information about your adoption:
- age at adoption revelation;
  - person who revealed adoptive status;
  - manner of adoption revelation;
  - ability to discuss adoption with adoptive parents;
  - pre-reunion beliefs about birth mother's reasons for relinquishment;
  - adoptive parents attitude to your search;
  - did you feel guilty about searching.

The rest of the questionnaire (viz. Q23 to Q94) was of only peripheral interest to this study. The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

Letter to Subjects:

A joint covering letter from Jigsaw WA and ARCS was attached to the front of the questionnaire (see Appendix 3). The letter:

- a). explained the rationale of the study;
- b). outlined the confidential nature of the study, particularly the role of Jigsaw WA in distributing the questionnaires (viz. to prevent identification of individuals to persons outside of Jigsaw, ARCS had only a code number);
- c). the importance of the research; and
- d). encouraged the subject to complete and return the questionnaire as quickly as possible.

### Distribution:

Jigsaw WA utilized its records to identify 120 adult adoptees who had had reunions with member(s) of their birth families. The questionnaire, reply paid envelope and covering letter was posted by Jigsaw WA to each of the 120 people, with ARCS reimbursing Jigsaw WA for the postage costs. The reply paid envelopes were addressed to ARCS.

### Response Rate:

87 of the 120 adult adoptees who were sent questionnaires, returned a completed questionnaire to ARCS. A reminder was sent to all subjects approximately four weeks after initial despatch of the questionnaires to maximize the response rate. Twelve (10%) of the adoptees who had been sent questionnaires, rang Jigsaw WA or ARCS for clarification of questions; to check on confidentiality; and to ask whether it was appropriate for them to answer the questionnaire (for example where the birth mother was dead and no contact occurred; where contact was rejected by birth parent(s)). One questionnaire was returned with a letter refusing participation in the study; two were returned too late for inclusion in the results; and six were returned unclaimed. The adjusted response rate is thus 79 percent.

### Data Analysis:

Factor Analysis of Question 12 resulted in four factors: Biological Identity; Alienation; Genealogical Concern; and Curiosity. This analysis is discussed in detail in the Results, Chapter Three.

### Item Generation based on the four Factors identified:

The four categories identified on the basis of face validity prior to Study Ib and confirmed in the Factor Analysis of items in Study Ib were used as the base to generate additional items. The research committee did this after extensive re-examination of the original items, examination of research, and from clinical observation. These four categories were: biological identity, alienation, genealogical concern and curiosity.

Additional items were generated to increase the number of items in each of the four factor categories. Hulin, Drasgow and Parsons (1983) recommend that the item pool needs to be large enough to provide stable item difficulty and validity statistics. Nunnally (1978) suggests the pool should be twice the number of items wanted for the measure. Special attention was paid to writing items in both directions to minimize acquiescence bias in response. Only those items which loaded on the four factors were used as the basis for this process. Over 80 items were collected in this way and then the research committee carefully examined the items for overlap and clarity of meaning.

An additional category concerned with "Integration" was included, on the basis of theoretical rationale, and reinforced by comments from adoptees in counselling and research. Integration was seen as the process in the adoptee of integrating within the individual aspects of environment and hereditary. Adoptees have a demand placed upon them as a result of the fact of adoption to merge into their perception of "Who am I?" both the known facts of their life to date (environment); and the information, or more frequently lack of information on their genealogy. The concept of Integration was conceptualised as reflecting the individual adoptees degree of comfort with that merging. Adoptees speak of not understanding parts of their behaviour, and feeling as if parts of them don't fit

together. The concept of Integration was included to cover these aspects of stated identity integration on an experimental basis.

The items were assigned to one of the five categories. The number of items per category was reduced to approximately 10 and the total number reduced to 52 items. These 52 items by category are provided in Appendix 4.

## STUDY II:

### Rationale:

The aim of subject recruitment was to obtain a wide cross section of adult adoptees 18 to 65 years throughout Australia. It was also recognized that there needed to be sufficient numbers of subjects in particular categories to facilitate analysis, specifically those adoptees actively recruited were:

1. adoptees who were members of support groups (e.g. Jigsaw).
2. adoptees who were not affiliated with support groups.
3. adoptees of both sexes.
4. adoptees in the majority of Australian states.
5. adoptees who expressed no interest in searching for birth family members.
6. adoptees who were actively searching for birth family.
7. adoptees who had already established contact.
8. adoptees who volunteered to participate.
9. adoptees who were invited to participate.

Recruitment varied from sending questionnaires direct to adoptees associated with all Jigsaw/Triangle mainland states, to media publicity inviting interested adoptees to volunteer for the study. There were thus two major categories of subjects:

- a). Members of Adoptee Support groups sent questionnaires unsolicited and without reminders.
- b). Adoptees in the general public invited via media publicity to participate in the study. Reminders were sent to these subjects when appropriate.

Subjects:

Study II Questionnaires were sent to 1896 adult adoptees who were approached via two means:

- a). Adoption Jigsaw/Triangle in the 5 mainland

states: The Jigsaw and Triangle groups in

Australia are self help groups comprising all parties to adoption, i.e. adoptees, adoptive parents and relinquishing parents plus other relatives of these people. The primary aim of the groups is to facilitate contact between those separated by adoption. Thus most members are searchers, and hence tend to be older (e.g. few adoptees are less than 20; adoptive parents tend to be over 45 and relinquishing parents tend to be over 35). Members are also predominately women. All state and territory groups of Jigsaw/Triangle in Australia were invited to participate in the research project. All states agreed to participate, whilst neither of the Territory groups responded. Jigsaw Tasmania sent their acceptance too late for inclusion in the study.

Each of the Jigsaw/Triangle groups used their address lists of adoptees (members, ex-members, and those on the contact register) to identify adoptees for inclusion. All groups were asked to exclude any adoptees for whom addresses were thought to be out of date. The number of questionnaires distributed via these groups was 1,601. Of these 61 were returned to sender; and

745 were returned completed. The number included in the analysis was 719; 26 being excluded because they were incomplete or incorrectly completed. The adjusted response rate was thus 48 percent.

b). Media Recruitment: Many newspapers,

magazines, radio stations and television channels were approached to present a story to their readers/listeners/viewers on the research project.

The early approaches (March to June 1985) were for any interested adult adoptee to volunteer; the later approach (September, 1985) was via a Press Release (see Appendix 5) calling specifically for non searching adult adoptees to volunteer.

The television channels and magazines rejected all approaches for assistance despite considerable support from individual journalists. The newspapers and radio stations which published/broadcast the research are detailed in Appendix 6.

In total 270 questionnaires were requested via the media. Of these 4 were returned to sender unopened, and 214 were returned completed. Five of the returned questionnaires had to be excluded because they were incomplete or incorrectly completed. The adjusted response rate was thus 80 percent.

c). Other sources of subjects: Some clients of

the Adoption Research and Counselling Service, and people associated with ARCS or ARCS personnel, asked to be able to participate in the study. Further a group of adoptees against adoptee access to birth information from Victoria "The Australian

Adoption Council Inc.", responded to the "Age" article and asked for 10 questionnaires; 5 were returned completed.

In total only 25 questionnaires were distributed to these two categories of adoptee. One questionnaire had to be excluded of the 16 returned. Response was higher from the first group (79%), and lower (50%) for the second group. The overall response rate being 67 percent.

#### Summary of Subjects by Source:

The highest response rate was that for the media (volunteer) subjects 80 percent (i.e. 80% of those people who indicated that they wished to be sent a questionnaire, returned a completed questionnaire); while the overall rate for the Jigsaw/Triangle groups was 48 percent (i.e. 48% of those sent (unsolicited) questionnaires returned a completed questionnaire). The lower response rate for the Jigsaw/Triangle groups is considered to be due to:

1. The questionnaires were sent without prior request or agreement by the adoptees.
2. Jigsaw/Triangle address lists were known not to be completely up to date, but there was no means of updating the list. This was particularly the case for Victoria where 51 questionnaires (8% of the total distributed in Victoria) were returned to sender. It was subsequently established that Jigsaw Victoria, despite the request to all groups to only send questionnaires to those people for whom there was a current address listing (viz. updated in the previous 12 - 18 months), sent questionnaires out to all adoptees on their various lists, even where the addresses were years out of date. It is assumed that more



questionnaires than the 51 actually returned to ARCS were unsuccessful in reaching the addressee.

The breakdown for individual groups and the media is detailed in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Study II: Reponse Rate By Subject Source

Subject Source*	Number	*Return*	*Quests*	Questionnaires			*Resp.
		*Distrib-	to	*Excl-	* Returned & Used*		Rate
	* uted	*Sender*	*uded	* Male*	*Fem.*	*Total*	%
Jigsaw W.A.	* 150	1	3	19	65	84	57.5
Triangle NSW	* 300	1	1	26	112	138	46.3
Jigsaw Vic	* 600	51	10	59	158	217	40.3
Jigsaw S.A.	* 341	4	11	37	137	174	53.4
Jigsaw QLD.	* 210	4	1	23	83	106	51.7
Total All Jig.*	1601	61	26	164	555	719	47.5
Radio (all)	* 30	0	2	6	17	23	82.1
"Age" (Vic)	* 91	2	0	20	45	65	73.0
"Sunday Times"*	122	1	3	20	77	97	82.2
Other newspapers*	27	1	0	5	19	24	92.3
Tot All Media*	270	4	5	51	158	209	80.1
ARCS/Other	* 25	0	1	3	13	16	66.7
	*						
TOTAL	* 1896	65	32	217	726	944	52.5

Questionnaire: The study two questionnaire was pilot tested on 20 adult adoptees selected for the purpose by Jigsaw WA. They were asked to complete and comment on the questionnaire to enable the identification of problems in

the design and wording. Minor modifications were made to the questionnaire as a result of close examination of the responses and comments. The final questionnaire (see Appendix 7) comprised the following sections:

Section A: Current information about you.

12 questions. Primarily demographic information.

Section B: Information about your adoption.

11 questions. These questions sought information about the individuals adoption, including how and when they were told they were adopted; their reactions to being told; the nature of the information provided; opportunities for discussion; and their beliefs about their birth mother.

Section C: Self descriptions. 52 items.

These items were concerned with adoptee identity and included items pilot tested in Study Ib. (See Appendix 7 for a listing of the 52 items).

Section D: Relationship with adoptive parents:

A standardized instrument, the Parker Parental Bonding Instrument (PPBI) (Parker, Tupling, and Brown, 1979) was used to measure the nature of the relationship between the adoptee and adoptive parents (in years up to adoptee age 16 years); as perceived by the adoptee. The PPBI consists of two scales (parental care and overprotection) comprising a total of 25 items applied twice (mother and father). Parental care being a dimension ranging from low care (and defined by emotional coldness, indifference and neglect) to high care (and defined by affection, emotional warmth, empathy and closeness). Overprotection being a dimension ranging from high overprotection (and defined by control, overprotection, intrusion, excessive contact, infantilization and prevention of independent

behaviour) to low overprotection (and defined by allowance of independence and autonomy). Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979) observe that the parental care dimension was the strongest in their study and others and is the major parental dimension. There was less support for the overprotection dimension. While they represent the dimensions as orthogonal they found that overprotection is linked with lack of care. The only modification to this instrument was the insertion of the word 'adoptive' before father and mother. This was done to clearly identify that the questions were to be answered with regard to the adoptee's relationship with their adoptive parents. The advantages of this instrument to measure parental relationships were that it had been standardized on an Australian population (norms being provided for a general Sydney population); they found the scales to be independent of the sex of the child; they and Parker (1982) provide reliability and validity information which supports the use of the instrument; and it was relatively short.

Section E: Attitude to yourself. 10 items.

This section comprised the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The 10 item Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale explicitly measures global self esteem. Five items are stated in the positive direction and five in the negative to avoid acquiescence response set bias. Several studies support its validity as a measure (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Hoge & McCarthy, 1984; Demo, 1985). The Rosenberg scale has been considered a unidimensional scale. However there is evidence (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; McIver & Carmines, 1981; Hoge & McCarthy, 1984) that two factors can be extracted. The factors are however largely defined by the direction in which they are stated. Carmines and Zeller (1979) and Hoge and McCarthy (1984) conclude

that the scale should be used as a single scale. The five point scale version was used primarily because this presentation was used for the self description items (Section C).

#### Section F: Your birth family.

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This section consisted of three questions on information currently known by the adoptee about their birth family. The three questions concerned:

- non identifying information
- identifying information
- personal contact.

Subjects were assigned to a search category on the basis of these answers. (See Appendix 7 for full questions). Assignment of subjects to search categories in other studies (e.g Aumend & Barrett, 1984) has mostly been based on a simple question such as "If all adult adoptees were divided into two groups, searchers and nonsearchers, in which group would you tend to be?" The use of such questions to assign adoptees to search categories was considered to be too imprecise for the purposes of this study, and thus very precise categorization to search categories was built into the questionnaire. The three primary categorizations were non searchers (those who have never searched whatever the reason); searchers (those who have searched whatever the extent and intensity); and those who have had contact (in person, by letter, or telephone, and also where the people concerned were found to be deceased).

#### Section G: Decision to search.

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This series of questions was included to allow comparisons between adoptees and birth mothers on their decision to search or not to search. The question is a modification of a question used in the Relinquishing Mothers Decision to Search Study (Winkler, 1984). The

True/False format was used because this was the form used in the relinquishing mothers study (see Appendix 8 for the questions used in the relinquishing mothers study).

Section H:        Discussion with adoptive parents

regarding contact/reunion with birth parents. 5 questions. These questions enabled categorization of subjects on the existence/quality of discussion of adoption with adoptive parents regarding contact. Ability to discuss adoption and adoptive status have been identified as of importance in adoptee - adoptive parent relationships, and in facilitating the search process for the adoptee. There is also evidence that adoptees wait to search until after the death of adoptive parents (e.g. Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978).

Section I:        The search. 7 questions.

These questions provided information on when, how, and for whom search was undertaken. The questions were phrased to permit comparison with the Winkler (1984) relinquishing mothers study.

Section J:        Expectations of contact. 19 questions.

These questions were included for another study and were not considered by the author for this study.

Procedure:

A) Subjects Recruited Through Self Help Groups:

Initial Contact: Each of the groups made contact with ARCS following receipt of a letter from ARCS notifying them that the study was ready to proceed.

Despatch of Questionnaires: The number of

questionnaires requested together with reply paid envelopes were forwarded to the contact person of each group (see Table 3). The questionnaires were numbered prior to despatch and recorded. The individual questionnaires were then mailed by each group in their own time, in several instances over three to four weeks.

TABLE 3  
Breakdown of Questionnaire Distribution  
by Jigsaw/Triangle group

	Month	No. Requested	No. Distr.	No. Rtd
Jigsaw Queensland	July	230	210	111
Jigsaw Western Australia	July	150	150	88
Jigsaw South Australia	July	384	341	189
Triangle New South Wales	August	300	300	140
Jigsaw Victoria	September	600	600	277
Jigsaw Tasmania	November	40	too late	
TOTAL ALL JIGSAW	July to Nov.	1,704	1,601	805

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Covering Letter from the Self Help Group: The self help

groups were asked to include a covering letter making the following points to their members concerning the research:

- a). The group supported the research.
- b). Confidentiality would be maintained because Jigsaw/Triangle were sending the questionnaires to individuals on ARCS's behalf. ARCS thus had no names or other identifying information.
- c). The study was a national study; adoptees were recruited for it through approaches to Jigsaw/Triangle in each state, and through articles in the local W.A. and national media.

- d). The research would benefit all adoptees because it was the first comprehensive examination of the full range of adoptees, rather than particular subgroups of adoptees. The view point of a full range of adoptees would be considered for the first time in a very large sample. This balanced study would provide much needed information for policy makers, workers and those involved in the extended adoption family.
- e). Jigsaw/Triangle's encouragement of each person to respond because a large number of adoptee's were required.
- f). The information obtained was strictly confidential and would be treated as such.
- g). The results of the research would be available to Jigsaw/Triangle, and to individuals following request to ARCS.

These covering letters varied considerably despite identical requests to all. The variation was from a brief (4 line) note attached to the covering letter (NSW), to a more detailed full page letter (Vic). Each group made an effort to convey the information to individuals.

Questionnaire Return: Questionnaires were returned by respondents over an extended period. No reminders could be sent by ARCS because of the confidentiality issue and the only other way to send a reminder would have been to send one to all. The cost of such an exercise was beyond the finances of the project. Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia, however reminded their members through their monthly newsletter. The other groups were informed of this action but chose not to follow suit. ARCS was dependant on the good will of the groups in this area. NSW put a notice in the August issue of their newsletter indicating that the questionnaire was to be despatched to members, and asking those who did not wish to participate

to contact the group. While no one did this it is logical to assume that this notification prepared the NSW members for receipt of the questionnaire. Response rate was highest for W.A. (58%) which may well have been favourably affected by it being a local project; by the newsletter reminder; and by the high media coverage in Western Australia. The next two States: S.A. (53%) and Queensland (52%) were reminded by newsletter after receipt of the questionnaire. N.S.W. (46%) and Victoria (40%) both had response rates below 50%. It is assumed that N.S.W.'s slightly better performance was due to the advance warning of the Questionnaire being sent. Victoria on the other hand did not remind its members; and the Victorian mailing list was considerably out of date.

#### B). Subjects Recruited Via the Media Campaign

Initial Contact: Following a newspaper or radio story, interested adoptees made contact with ARCS. The majority of adoptees rang to give their name and address. Others wrote requesting the questionnaire. A small number of adoptive parents requested questionnaires on behalf of their adopted 'children'. There were also some spouses and friends who requested questionnaires. In total 24 questionnaires were sought on behalf of an adoptee and not by the adoptee directly. It was decided to include these adoptees as the questionnaire was sent to them and they had the choice as to whether to complete it or not. Thus the questionnaires were in effect unsolicited. The response rate for this group was 63 percent.

There were also quite a few adoptees and others who read the article/heard the radio programme and wanted to talk about adoption and related issues. Several Western Australian volunteers went on to request individual counselling.



### Despatch of Questionnaires.

Questionnaires were sent direct to the adoptee together with a reply paid envelope. A record card for each subject was established, noting code number, name, address, and other relevant information.

### Reminder.

Adoptees who had not returned the questionnaire within six weeks were sent a reminder letter; an additional 43 questionnaires (from 85 reminders) were returned following the receipt of the reminder.

### Comparison of the three categories of search by

recruitment source. Table 4 outlines a comparison of the three major categories of search (non searcher, searcher, and contact) by the recruitment source.

### STUDY III:

Study three involved the analysis of the relationships between the questions asked in Study two. The Hypotheses posed at the end of the Introduction were tested, and the conclusions outlined in the next two chapters.

TABLE 4  
Recruitment source by search category.

Recruit. Source	Non Search.		Searchers		Contact		Total		All
	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem*Male*		
Jigsaw/Triangle:	9	4	388	107	159	53	556	164	720
W.A.	1	0	56	17	8	2	65	19	84
S.A.	4	0	85	21	48	16	137	37	174
N.S.W.	2	3	81	15	29	8	112	26	138
Victoria	2	0	98	35	58	24	158	59	217
Queensland	0	1	68	19	15	3	83	23	106
Media:	80	34	54	14	23	4	157	52	209
"Age"	23	9	14	9	8	2	45	20	65
"SundayTimes"	33	15	34	4	9	2	76	21	97
Other news.	11	5	5	0	3	0	19	5	24
Radio	13	5	1	1	3	0	17	6	23
Other Sources	7	2	2	1	4	0	13	3	16
Total all sources	96	40	444	122	186	57	726	219	945

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

## RESULTS

### Outline.

Results are reported for Study Ib, Study II, and Study III. Study Ia has been discussed in the Method Section. These results are presented in the following order:

1. General Description of the Samples Used: Details are presented for Study Ib, Study II, and Study III.  
N.B.: The subjects in Study II and Study III are identical.
2. Development of Adoptee Identity Measure: Detailed description of the statistical procedures undertaken to develop the measure, including reliability and validity tests.
3. Testing of the Hypotheses as outlined in the Introduction.

### General Description of the Samples.

#### Demographic Data.

Full details of the demographics available on the two samples (Study Ib and Study II/III) can be found in Appendix 9.

Sex: The proportion of males and females in the two studies (Ib & II/III) are virtually identical: one quarter were males and three quarters were female. The disproportionate representation of females has been reported in other research on adoptees (e.g. Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975; Slaytor, 1986).

Age: The age of subjects in Study II/III ranged from 14 to 78 years. The mean age was 34.8 years; with 68 percent of subjects aged between 21 and 40 years. Only 5 subjects (less than 1%) were aged less than 17 years, or more than 64 years. The age of subjects was not asked in Study Ib, and is thus not available for comparison with Study II/III.

Marital Status: In both studies (Ib & II/III) approximately three fifths of the adoptees were married. In Study II/III it was to be expected that the number of single subjects would be high (22%) because 39 percent of subjects were under 30 .

Occupation: The largest occupational category for both studies was that of Home Duties, which is consistent with a predominantly female sample population with a majority of subjects in the 20 to 40 years age group. Managerial/professional was disproportionately highly represented in the samples.

Ethnic background: Not surprisingly the majority of subjects in Study II/III did not know the ethnic origins of their birth father (63%), whereas 57 percent of them indicated knowledge of the origins of their birth mother, suggesting that adoptive parents had given this information to the adoptees. Over three quarters of adoptees in Study II/III believed their adoptive parents ethnic origins to be Australian. British origins were identified by slightly more than ten percent. Study Ib asked adoptees to identify ethnic background but did not specify whether these were to be for adoptive family or birth family, because this was a reunion study, it is probable that birth family backgrounds were provided.

### Development of Identity Measure:

Study I: This stage utilized the Adoptee Reunion Study as a preliminary test of the adoptee identity items developed from the adoptee discussion groups.

The 25 adoptee identity items (Question 12) were Factor Analysed using a Principal Factor Analysis with one iteration and the number of factors set at five. These eigen values are detailed in Table 5. Cattell's Scree Test (1966) was applied which confirmed that five factors be extracted. The five factors were interpreted by rotating the solution with Kaiser Normalization and Varimax Rotation. Examination of the variables revealed that Factor 3 comprised only one variable with a factor loading over 0.5. A second analysis was then conducted excluding the variable (number 8) and the number of factors was set at four. The eigen values are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
Study I: Eigen values for 5 and 4 Factor Solutions

Factor	5 factor soln eigen value	4 factor soln eigen value
Factor 1	11.20086	10.93563
Factor 2	1.99733	2.08922
Factor 3	1.56930	1.56402
Factor 4	1.33860	1.22987
Factor 5	1.16400	

\*\*\*\*\*

Appendix 10 details the Factor Loadings for each variable on each of the four Factors.

The 25 variables used in this stage of the research were phrased in the past tense, with subjects being asked to respond as they felt prior to reunion.

The four Factors identified were labelled Biological Identity (45.6% of variance); Alienation (8.7% of variance); Genealogical Concern (6.5% of variance); and Curiosity (5.1% of variance).

Study II: This stage involved the National sample of adoptees who were recruited via Jigsaw/Triangle (unsolicited) and via the media (solicited).

Creating Two Random Samples:

To facilitate the development of the measure the 943 sample of adult adoptees was divided into two approximately equal random samples. The two samples created were labelled Sample 1 and Sample 2.

Factor Analysis of 52 Adoptee Identity Items:

Sample 1 was used to derive the initial factors and Sample 2 was used to cross validate them. The total population was then used to obtain a final solution.

Number of Factors:

The number of factors to be extracted from factor analysis was determined by utilizing a classic Principal Components analysis. Components with Eigen values greater than 1.0 were initially retained. This resulted in ten components. Cattell's Scree Test (1966) was applied, and four components were examined in greater detail. The eigen values of the ten components are outlined in Table 6.

Method of Factor Extraction:

A Principal Axis Factoring method (Harman, 1976) was used to reduce the correlation matrix. The process commenced by utilizing squared multiple correlations as estimates of communality. This extracted 10 factors in 18 iterations on Sample 1. When this was repeated on

Sample 2, 9 factors in 7 iterations were obtained. On the total population 9 factors in 11 iterations were obtained. The retained factors were then rotated via Varimax rotation.

TABLE 6  
Study II: Eigen Values of the Ten Components  
With Values Over 1.0.

Component Number	Sample 1	Sample 2	Total Popn.
1.	17.16790	17.39844	17.46133
2.	3.55116	3.29103	3.54088
3.	2.52601	1.90064	2.39193
4.	1.87525	1.26320	1.75680
5.	1.65245	1.11888	1.50155
6.	1.38565		1.38149
7.	1.24391		1.26122
8.	1.13377		1.06325
9.	1.09628		1.02390
10.	1.03625		

\*\*\*\*\*

The items which made up the Factors for each sample were examined in detail. This revealed that only three of the Factors comprised five or more items, and made logical sense. This was further supported by the finding that only these three factors were replicated from Sample 1 to Sample 2.

The solutions for each factor were visually inspected for comparability (Gorsuch, 1983). On the basis of the examined communalities and similarities between these factor solutions 30 variables were retained and 22 were deleted. The retained variables were then used in a final Factor solution for the entire population. Table 7 details each of the 52 items and indicates on which factor(s) each item



Table 7

52 Identity Items showing on which Factor (if any) each  
Load in final solution, and whether item retained or not.

Item No.	Item Wording	Factor	Retained Yes/No
1.	Honesty is especially important to me.	-	No
2.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	BI	Yes
3.	I wonder who I really am.	BI	Yes
4.	It is easy for me to trust people.	-	No
5.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	BI	Yes
6.	I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	-	No
7.	I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	-	No
8.	I feel I have no roots.	BI	Yes
9.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	BI	Yes
10.	I always like to know where I stand.	-	No
11.	I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	AB	Yes
12.	Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	AB	Yes
13.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	CU	Yes
14.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	CU	Yes
15.	I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	-	No
16.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	BI	Yes
17.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	CU	Yes

Item No.	Item Wording	Factor	Retained Yes/No
18.	My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	-	No
19.	I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	-	No
20.	I feel clear about my potential.	-	No
21.	Making new friends is especially hard for me.	-	No
22.	I don't care what other people think of me.	-	No
23.	I feel like a second class person.	-	No
24.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	CU	No
25.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	BI	Yes
26.	I tend to cling to people.	AB	Yes
27.	It is easy for me to feel close to people.	-	No
28.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	CU	Yes
29.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	CU	Yes
30.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	BI	Yes
31.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	CU	Yes
32.	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	-	No
33.	I feel I am in full control of my life.	-	No
34.	I feel I really don't belong.	BI	Yes
35.	I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	-	No
36.	I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	-	No
37.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	BI & CU	Yes

Item No.	Item Wording	Factor	Retained Yes/No
38.	I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	-	No
39.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	BI	Yes
40.	I usually feel at peace with myself.	-	No
41.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	BI	Yes
42.	I mix easily with people.	-	No
43.	I wonder who I look like.	CU	Yes
44.	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	CU	Yes
45.	I find it hard to break relationships.	AB	Yes
46.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	BI	Yes
47.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	CU	Yes
48.	I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	AB	Yes
49.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	BI	Yes
50.	I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	-	No
51.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	BI	Yes
52.	I expect a lot of people.	-	No

Note: BI = Biological Identity

CU = Curiosity

AB = Abandonment

\*\*\*\*\*

loads; the table also indicates whether the item was retained, or not. Appendix 11 shows the Factor Loadings on the 52 Identity Scales for the three factors identified by the Varimax solution. Factor Loadings for Sample 1 and Sample 2 are provided and each scale is defined as retained or not. Appendix 12 provides complete details of the retained items and outlines the communality and the 3 factor scores for each of the variables.

The 30 items thus identified form the measure of adoptee identity. Factor 1 was called Biological Identity (32.8% of variance) because it comprised items which addressed the individual's perception of themselves in biological time. Factor 2 (6.0% of variance) was called Curiosity because it comprised items which addressed interest in information about the adoptee's birth and birth family. Factor 3 (3.6% of variance) was called Abandonment after originally being labelled Alienation, as it was decided that the items addressed a specific type of alienation related to fear of abandonment and loss of relationships, rather than the more general alienation (e.g. Dean, 1961; Seeman, 1959; and Schmitt, 1983). Biological Identity and Curiosity were very similar to the factors obtained in Study I, whereas Abandonment, while clearly being related to Alienation, was much more specialised. This will be discussed further in the Discussion Chapter.

The object of these factor analyses was to replicate the factors across random samples of individuals. Gorsuch (1983) states that when using the same variables and true random sampling from the population, the primary parameters influencing the replicability of statistical conclusions are: accuracy of measurement; the strength of the phenomena; the number of variables; and the number of individuals upon which the statistic is based. The first two are manifested jointly in the communalities of the variables in the factor-analytic study. The higher the communalities the more likely replication will occur. He

states that only two thirds of the factors in a study which meet the previous requirements can be expected to replicate. Communalities in this replication were of good size (see Appendix 12); the sample is four times larger than that recommended by Gorsuch; and 3 of the 4 factors were replicated in the analysis.

#### Reliability of the Measure:

Coefficient alpha sets an upper limit to the reliability of tests constructed using the domain-sampling model which has been used in this project. It is the basic formula for determining the reliability based on internal consistency, and Nunnally (1978) advises its application to all new measurement methods.

Coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was obtained on the remaining domain of 30 items. The Cronbach alpha for the 30 item measure was 0.9534, and examination of each of the 30 variables revealed high internal consistency. Cronbach alpha on the subscales was 0.9462 for Biological Identity; 0.9143 for Curiosity; and 0.7812 for Abandonment.

#### Validity of the Three Sub-Scale Measure:

There are three types of validity which need to be confirmed (Nunnally, 1978; Crocker & Algina, 1986):

- a) content validity;
- b) predictive validity; and
- c) construct validity.

Tests of each type of validity were made.

#### Content Validity:

The content validity of the three sub-scales was substantiated as part of the process of the measure development. Specifically, the factors were constructed on one random sample and confirmed on a second random sample. Further the factors obtained in Study II were developed from the factors obtained in Study I. This was particularly true of Biological Identity and Curiosity.

The items which form Abandonment were drawn from the pool of Alienation items but the nature of the scale was different to that obtained in Study I, thus the scale Abandonment has been excluded from the final Adoptee Identity Measure.

The high level of internal consistency, as measured by the Coefficient Alpha, also contributes to the content validity of the two sub-scales of the measure (Nunnally, 1978).

#### Predictive Validity:

The predictive validity of the sub-scales was tested using Discriminant Function Analysis to determine how well the three sub-scales could predict the search status of adoptees. It was predicted that the sub-scales would be able to differentiate between adoptees who had not searched (NS), those who had searched but had no contact (S-) and those who had searched and had contact of some kind (S+).

To test this a stepwise discriminant function analysis was used with the dependent variable defining the three search status groups; and with Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment as the independent variables. The minimization of Wilk's Lambda was used as the stepwise selection criteria. The final model was constructed on Sample 1 and classification rates were cross-validated on Sample 2.

Table 8 gives details of the group means and standard deviations of the three adoptee identity sub-scales by the three search status groups from Sample 1.

Table 9 shows the Wilk's Lambda and univariate F-ratio values and significance tests for each of the three sub-scales.

Each variable (that is Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment) can individually differentiate between the three search status groups, in that univariate Analyses of Variance show significant differences in means for each of Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment among the three groups.

Table 8  
Group Means and Standard Deviations of the Identity  
measure subscales by search category (Sample 1).

search category	Biol. Iden.		Curiosity		Abandonment		Total Number
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Non Searcher	3.378	1.02	2.807	1.01	2.748	0.89	73
Searcher-no con.	2.358	0.82	1.673	0.50	2.463	0.92	275
Searcher-contact	2.738	1.04	1.985	0.94	2.362	1.01	110
Total	2.612	0.98	1.929	0.83	2.484	0.94	458

\*\*\*\*\*

Table 9  
Wilk's Lambda and univariate F-ratio values and  
significance for each of sub scales (Sample 1).

sub-scale name	Wilk's Lambda	F	Significance
Biological Identity	.85814	37.61	<.0001
Curiosity	.76188	71.10	<.0001
Abandonment	.98311	3.91	<.0208

\*\*\*\*\*

The direct analysis indicated that the sub scales accounted for the variance in the following rank order:

- Curiosity;
- Biological Identity; and
- Abandonment.

On the other hand the step wise analysis indicated that the subscales were added in the following order:

- Curiosity;
- Abandonment; and
- Biological Identity.

This means that Curiosity and Biological Identity were highly correlated ( $r = .6413$ ). In addition the F ratios

indicate that Curiosity was accounting for the majority of the variance, followed by Biological Identity. While Abandonment was significant, it is noted that both the significance and the F ratios are relatively low and thus the effect for Abandonment is less clear cut than that for Curiosity and Biological Identity.

Given three groups, two discriminant functions were possible. The results indicate that both functions were significant, see Table 10. Pooled within groups correlations between the discriminant functions and the independent variables showed Function One to be primarily a combination of Curiosity and Biological Identity while Function Two was Abandonment (see Table 11).

Table 10  
Summary of Canonical Discriminant Functions (Sample 1)

Function Number	Wilks Lambda	Chi sqrd	D.F.	Signif.	Canonical correlation
1	.7295	143.18	6	<.0001	.509
2	.9846	7.02	2	<.03	.124

\*\*\*\*\*

Table 11  
Correlations between Canonical Discriminant Functions  
and the Three Sub-scales (Sample 1).

Sub-scale	Function 1	Function 2
Curiosity	0.94279*	0.32919
Biological Identity	0.68695*	-0.13381
Abandonment	0.16211	0.71601*

\*\*\*\*\*



Table 12  
Classification Rates for Sample 1 and Sample 2

## SAMPLE 1:

search category	No. Cases	PREDICTED SEARCH CATEGORY					
		Non		Searcher		Searcher	
		Searcher	No Contact	No Contact	Contact	Contact	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Non-Searcher	73	45	61.6	20	27.4	8	11.0
Searcher-no contact	275	30	10.9	220	80.0	25	9.1
Searcher-contact	110	21	19.1	70	63.6	19	17.3

## SAMPLE 2:

search category	No. Cases	PREDICTED SEARCH CATEGORY					
		Non		Searcher		Searcher	
		Searcher	No Contact	No Contact	Contact	Contact	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Non-Searcher	62	35	56.5	22	35.5	5	8.1
Searcher-no contact	287	40	13.9	210	73.2	37	12.9
Searcher-contact	134	23	17.2	93	69.4	18	13.4

\*\*\*\*\*

Table 12 gives details of the Classification rates of success for prediction of search category from the three subscale scores. These are provided for Sample 1 (the sample on which the scale was created) and Sample 2 (the validation sample). The percent of cases correctly classified in Sample 1 was 62.01; while the percent for Sample 2 was 54.45. This is a shrinkage in prediction of 7.56 percent. It is clear from examination of the classification tables that the adoptee identity sub-scales can successfully predict between non searchers and searchers but not between the two categories of searchers.

The measure is at its best in predicting searchers (all categories) doing this successfully in over 80 percent of cases for both Samples.

Post-hoc analysis of the means of the three subscales (Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment) between the three search categories showed all pairwise means to be significantly different (i.e. NS versus S-,  $p < .001$ ; NS versus S+,  $p < .001$ ; and S+ versus S-,  $p < .002$ ). That is, there were significant differences between the means on the three subscales for the three search groups. However, the discriminant function analysis has shown that the measure is unable to reliably predict the sub-category of searchers, but is able to predict non-searchers and searchers-unspecified. This apparent contradiction will be discussed in the Discussion.

A further discriminant function analysis including the age of the adoptees as an independent variable, showed that age did not increase discriminative power above and beyond the three sub-scales: Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment.

An Analysis of Variance with the pairwise post-hoc Scheffe' multiple comparison procedure on mean age for groups differentiated by search status also revealed no significant differences.

Two way Analyses of Variance were conducted on Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment for groups differentiated by sex and search status. For Biological Identity and Abandonment, results showed significant differences in mean Biological Identity

( $F_{2,935} = 51.1$ ;  $p < .001$ )

and Abandonment ( $F_{2,935} = 7.5$ ;  $p < .001$ ) for groups

differentiated by search status. In the case of Curiosity results revealed significant differences in mean Curiosity

( $F_{2,935} = 120.3$ ;  $p < .001$ )

and sex ( $F_{1,935} = 4.8$ ;  $p < .03$ ) for groups

differentiated by search status. That is, significant differences were found for all three sub-scales for groups differentiated by search status; but only Curiosity showed a significant difference for sex. Females were significantly more curious than males (i.e. females score lower than males). Table 13 gives details of the means, F-values and significance for the main effects. The two-way interactions for all were non significant.

Table 13  
Two Way Analysis of Variance on three sub-scales  
by sex and search status

SEX	Male	Female	F	p
Biological Identity	2.75	2.59	2.455	n/s
Curiosity	2.07	1.88	4.789	<.05
Abandonment	2.61	2.47	3.169	n/s

SEARCH STATUS	Non Searcher	Searcher No Contact	Searcher Contact	F	p
Biological Identity	3.34	2.43	2.69	51.14	<.001
Curiosity	2.80	1.71	1.92	120.35	<.001
Abandonment	2.79	2.44	2.49	7.51	<.001

\*\*\*\*\*

In an attempt to ascertain the role that age may play in confounding the results of the above two-way Analyses of Variance, these analyses were repeated with age as a covariate. The results remained essentially unchanged, and all factors reported significant, remained so.

In summary, the predictive validity of the subscales shows that each individual scale is capable of differentiating between searchers and non-searchers. Their collective impact leads to an overall cross-validated success rate of 54.4 percent, but this increases to 80 percent if one collapses the two searchers classifications. Age is not a significant confounding variable.

#### Construct Validity:

The concept of Adoptee Identity is an abstract one and thus embodies the hypothesis, that a variety of adoptee behaviours will be correlated in a manner consistent with the adoptees perception of personal identity. Nunnally (1978) observes that there are three main aspects of construct validation:

- a. specifying the domain of observables related to the construct;
- b. determining the extent to which the observables measure the same and different things;
- c. determining the extent to which measures of the construct produce results predictable from acceptable theoretical hypotheses concerning the construct.

The domain of observables was developed from Study One and tested in Study II. The results of the Factor Analyses of these two studies indicated that the items produced and refined were measuring a common construct which has been called adoptee identity. Factor Analysis is recommended as a validation tool for all three types of validity (Nunnally, 1978; Crocker & Algina, 1986) playing different parts for each.

With regard to construct validity the factor analysis has shown the groups of items which comprise each of Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment to be highly correlated with the factors defined by each of those groupings. This demonstrates that the factors each have 'strong' internal structure. Nunnally (1978) states that if such 'strong'

internal structure is combined with substantial correlation between the factors; that this provides evidence of the cross structure between the factors. This was achieved for Biological Identity and Curiosity but not for Abandonment. This provides support for the construct validity of Biological Identity and Curiosity as a measure of adoptee identity, and further support for the exclusion of Abandonment from the measure.

The Adoptee Identity Measure comprising the scales Biological Identity and Curiosity has thus been shown to satisfy the validation requirements of each type of validity recommended.

### STUDY III:

#### Testing of the Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Those adoptees who have decided to search for member(s) of birth family will have less sense of belonging in biological time than those who have decided not to search.

An independent t-test was conducted on mean Biological Identity for searchers and non searchers (searchers who had had contact were excluded, this will be explained in the next section). A significant difference in mean Biological Identity for the two groups was found.

( $t = 9.02$ ;  $df = 175.58$ ;  $p < .001$ )<sup>1</sup>.

Searchers had lower Biological Identity than non searchers.

While the specific hypotheses were not posed in the Introduction it was decided to determine whether there were significant differences in mean Curiosity and Abandonment between adoptees who search and adoptees who do not search.

---

1. Separate variance estimates were used in tests lacking homogeneity of variance .

This revealed a significant difference in mean Curiosity for the two groups.

( $t = 11.61$ ;  $df = 152.27$ ;  $p < .001$ )<sup>2</sup>.

Searchers had lower Curiosity scores (i.e. more curious) than did non searchers. Another significant difference in mean Abandonment for the two groups was found

( $t = 4.08$ ;  $df = 695$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Searchers had lower Abandonment scores (i.e. more sense of abandonment) than did non searchers. Table 14 gives details of the means and standard deviations on the three subscales for the two search categories.

Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 14  
Mean and Standard Deviations on the the three sub-scales  
for Non Searchers and Searchers-without contact.

search cat.	No.	B. I.		CU		AB	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Non Searcher	135	3.0	.952	2.8	1.059	2.8	.937
Searcher- no contact	562	2.2	.747	1.7	.557	2.4	.888

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Search Status:

Search Status is an important concept in adoption research. For this reason, and to permit further examination of the validity of the Measure, this section is devoted to describing search status and how it is related to other variables for the samples of adoptees used in this project.

- 
2. Separate variance estimates were used in tests lacking homogeneity of variance.

The adoptees in Study Ib were all searching adoptees who had had some kind of contact with their birth family. Study II/III permitted categorization of adoptees into six groups, as outlined in Table 15.

Table 15  
Study II/III: Search Category by Sex

search category	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
not interested	14	(6)	34	(5)	48	(5)
no effort	26	(12)	59	(8)	85	(9)
NON SEARCHER	40	(18)	93	(13)	133	(14)
registered	68	(32)	249	(35)	317	(34)
not sure	14	(6)	63	(9)	77	(8)
actively seeking	37	(17)	130	(18)	167	(18)
SEARCHER-NO CONTACT	119	(55)	442	(52)	561	(51)
SEARCHER-CONTACT	59	(27)	182	(25)	241	(26)

\*\*\*\*\*

It was decided to collapse these groups into three categories for simplicity; these were non searcher (combination of those not interested in search, and those who had made no effort to search); searcher-no contact (combination of those registered, those not sure and those actively searching); and searcher-contact (those who had had contact of some kind by letter, telephone or in person).

Interestingly only 5 percent of the adoptees were not interested in search. Those adoptees who indicated that they were not sure about contact (8%) were categorized as Searchers. One third of the adoptees indicated that their search was a passive one, by their registration for contact (on contact register or registration under the Victorian

legislation). Only 18 percent indicated that they were actively seeking contact. One quarter of the adoptees had had contact of some kind.

Level of Information known about birth family by  
searchers with and without contact:

The adoptees who were categorized as searchers (with or without contact) varied considerably in the amount of information they had about their birth family. Table 16 provides these details. The member of birth family whom most wanted to contact was birth mother (52%), closely followed by "anyone" (39%), while other members such as birth father, and siblings were each only rated most preferred, by 3 percent of the searchers.

Table 16  
Level of information known by searching adoptees  
in Study II/III about birth family

member of B. Family	No Info. known	Non Ident. Info.	Ident. Info.	Reunion	Deceased	Total
B. Mother	158	285	166	166	38	813
B. Father	395	185	65	45	37	727
B. Siblings	421	71	65	130	4	691
B. Grd Pars	427	37	58	43	86	651
Other Rels	445	22	75	85	3	630

\*\*\*\*\*

Sex and Search Status:

Cross tabulation of sex and search status revealed no significant association, see Table 17 for numbers and percentages. A post hoc analysis of the means of males and females confirmed this non significance.



Table 17  
Sex by Search Status

sex	Non Searcher		Searcher NoCon		Searcher+Con	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	41	18.7	119	54.3	59	26.9
Female	94	13.0	443	61.4	185	25.6
Total	135	14.3	562	59.7	244	25.9

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Age and Search Status:

Comparison of age and search status revealed no significant association. This was discussed in detail in the section on predictive validity and will not be further discussed here. The only slight variation was in the age group 14 - 20 years which showed that this group were more frequently non searchers (28%) than other age categories, this is however very logical given that adoptees are discouraged by all groups to search prior to 18 years. Table 18 gives details of numbers and percentages.

Table 18  
Study II/III: Search Category by Age

present age yrs	Non Searcher		Search-NoCon		Searcher+Con		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
14 - 20	19	28	39	57	10	15	68
21 - 30	46	16	189	64	61	21	296
31 - 40	40	12	188	56	109	32	337
41 - 50	15	11	86	62	37	27	138
51 - 60	10	13	48	62	19	25	77
61 +	4	18	10	45	8	36	22
Total	134	14	560	60	244	26	938

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Hypothesis 2A: Adoptees who have decided to search will have lower self esteem than those adoptees who have decided not to search.

An independent t-test was conducted on mean Self Esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), for searchers and non searchers in the total sample (searchers with contact were excluded). This revealed a significant difference in mean Self Esteem for the two groups. ( $t = -2.62$ ;  $df = 695$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Searchers (mean = 2.4, S.D. = .949) had higher Self Esteem scores (i.e. lower self esteem) than did non searchers (Mean = 2.2, S.D. = .938). The absolute difference between the means was very small; the large sample size explains why such a difference was significant.

Hypothesis 2A was supported.

Hypothesis 2B: Adoptees who have lower Self Esteem will have less sense of belonging in biological time.

A regression analysis revealed a significant association of Self Esteem on Biological Identity ( $F_{1,941} = 228.90$ ;  $p < .0001$ ).

The correlation between these variables was  $-0.41$  indicating that 19.5 percent of the variance in Biological Identity was predicted by Self Esteem. As Self Esteem increases Biological Identity decreases (viz. as self esteem is reduced, the sense of belonging in biological time is reduced).

Hypothesis 2B is supported.

Hypothesis 3A: Adoptees told of their adoptive status after age 10 years, will be more likely, than adoptees told earlier, to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

An independent t-test was conducted on mean Biological Identity for adoptees told of their adoptive status 11 years and over, and those told before 10 years. This revealed a significant difference in mean Biological Identity for the two groups ( $t = 2.53$ ;  $df = 678.03$ ;  $p < .02$ )<sup>3</sup>.

Adoptees told of adoptive status after age 10 years had lower Biological Identity scores (Mean = 2.28, S.D. = .810) than adoptees told earlier (Mean = 2.43, S.D. = .883). The absolute difference in the means was small; that such a difference was significant is explained by the very large sample size.

Hypothesis 3A was supported.

#### Disclosure of Adoptive Status:

To facilitate the understanding of the effect of age at, and manner of, adoption disclosure for adoptees the following relationships are reported, and will be discussed in the Discussion.

#### Age at Disclosure of Adoptive Status:

The mean age of disclosure was 10.5 years in Study II/III. Triseliotis (1973) concludes from his study that adoptees told after 10 years of age, of their adoptive status, are more likely to have problems and are more likely to search. Revelation of adoptive status under 10 years of age accounted for 56 percent of adoptees in the reunion study (Study Ib) and 59

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3. Separate variance estimates were used in tests lacking homogeneity of variance.

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percent in the national study (Study II/III); with a further 33 percent and 30 percent respectively being told between 11 and 20 years. The detailed breakdown possible from Study II/III revealed that 18 percent were told under 4 years; 37 percent were told under 6 years. A further 19 percent were told between 6 and 9 years. Over 10 years, 19 percent were told when 10-13 years, and 8 percent between 14-17 years. That is 86 percent were told prior to reaching 18 years of age.

Cross tabulation of sex and age at adoption disclosure revealed that females had been informed more often up to ten years of age; viz. 70 percent of females versus 58 percent of males. There was also a trend for older adoptees to have been informed at older ages (see Table 19). For example only 30 percent of adoptees 51 years and over had been told when 10 years or less, compared with 96 percent of those aged 20 years or less.

Table 19  
Age at adoption disclosure by present age

present age years	Age at Adoption Disclosure								Total  No.
	up to 10		11 - 20		21 - 30		31 plus		
	years		years		years		years		
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	
14 - 20	64	(96)	3	(4)	-	-	-	-	67
21 - 30	246	(84)	34	(12)	15	(5)	-	-	295
31 - 40	214	(64)	85	(25)	19	(6)	18	(5)	336
41 - 50	66	(48)	40	(29)	21	(15)	11	(8)	138
51 +	26	(30)	34	(39)	6	(7)	21	(24)	87
All ages	616	(65)	196	(22)	61	(7)	50	(6)	873

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# Person Responsible for Disclosure of Adoptive Status:

The person most frequently identified as disclosing adoptive status to the adoptees was an adoptive parent; adoptive mother was the most likely (36%); with both parents a close second (30%); and adoptive father much less likely (4%). In total 66 percent of subjects in Study Ib and 70 percent in Study II/III identified adoptive parent (or parents) as the person responsible for disclosure.

When present age is cross tabulated with person responsible for adoption disclosure it is clear that one or more adoptive parents were more likely to have disclosed adoptive status, the younger the adoptee. For example, adoptees 41 years and over were told by one or both parents in only 42 percent of cases, compared to 90 and 84 percent, for those under 21 years, and 21 -30 years respectively. This is clearly shown in Table 20.

Table 20  
Age by Person Responsible for Disclosure  
of Adoptive Status

Source of	Present Age in years									
Disclosure	14 -20		21 -30		31 - 40		41 plus		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Ad. Mother	21	(31)	105	(35)	144	(43)	67	(28)	337	(36)
Ad. Father	-		6	(2)	21	(6)	11	(5)	38	(4)
Both Pars.	40	(59)	139	(47)	80	(24)	23	(10)	282	(30)
Ad. Sibs.	2	(3)	7	(2)	3	(1)	7	(3)	19	(2)
Other Rels	-		6	(2)	18	(5)	29	(12)	53	(6)
Friends/Aq.	3	(4)	11	(4)	23	(7)	42	(18)	79	(8)
Overheard	-		8	(3)	10	(3)	25	(10)	43	(5)
Govt. Off.	-		2	(1)	4	(1)	8	(3)	14	(1)
Other	2	(3)	14	(5)	32	(10)	27	(11)	75	(8)
Total	68		298		335		239		940	

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# Age at Disclosure of Adoptive Status and Search Status:

The age which an adoptee is told of adoptive status has been linked (e.g. Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975) to searching behaviour. Triseliotis (1973) found that searching adoptees were more likely to have been told of their adoptive status after age ten years. To examine this relationship a cross tabulation of search categories by age at disclosure of adoptive status was conducted. Table 21 gives details of this information. Non searchers tended to have been told of their adoptive status when younger than the other groups (non searchers = 75%; searcher-no-contact = 64%; and searchers-contact = 68%; were told when 10 years or less). In contrast non searchers were told their adoptive status when 20 years or more in only 6 percent of cases, while searchers were told over 20 years in 14 percent of cases.

Table 21  
Study II/III: Age at Adoptive Status Disclosure  
by Search Category

age at disclosure	Non Searcher		Searcher No Contact		Searcher Contact		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
up to 10 yrs	27	73	61	297	38	126	126	496
11 - 20 yrs	9	16	31	95	11	41	51	152
21 - 30 yrs	1	4	17	27	4	7	22	38
31 + yrs	3	-	10	23	6	8	19	31
Total	40	93	119	442	59	182	218	717

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Hypothesis 3B: Adoptees told of their adoptive status in a hateful manner, as opposed to those told in a loving manner, will be more likely to have a lower sense of Biological Identity.

To examine this an independent t-test was conducted on mean Biological Identity for those told lovingly and those told hatefully. Those who used the mid point of the scale (viz neither loving nor hateful) were excluded. This showed a significant difference in mean Biological Identity for the two groups.

( $t = 6.04$ ;  $df = 121.12$ ;  $p < .001$ )<sup>4</sup>.

Those told in a hateful manner had lower Biological Identity than those told lovingly.

Hypothesis 3B was supported.

Two further independent t-tests were conducted on mean Curiosity and mean Abandonment, to see if there was a significant difference in mean Curiosity and Abandonment for adoptees told of adoption status lovingly or hatefully. A significant difference in mean Curiosity for the two groups was found.

( $t = 6.34$ ;  $df = 172.92$ ;  $p < .001$ )<sup>4</sup>.

Those told in a loving manner had higher Curiosity scores (were less curious) than those told in a hateful manner. A significant difference in mean Abandonment for the two groups was found ( $t = 2.57$ ;  $df = 641$ ;  $p < .02$ ).

Those told in a loving manner had higher Abandonment scores (had less sense of abandonment) than those told in a hateful manner.

Table 22 gives details of the means and Standard Deviations on the three sub-scales of adoptees told in a loving manner and adoptees told in a hateful manner.

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4. Separate variance estimates were used in tests lacking homogeneity of variance.

Table 22

Means and Standard Deviations of the three subscales  
for adoptees told in a loving or hateful manner.

Manner of disclosure	No.	Biol. Ident.		Curiosity		Abandonment	
		mean	S.D.	mean	S.D.	mean	S.D.
loving	561	2.5	.889	2.0	.870	2.6	.931
hateful	82	2.0	.713	1.6	.477	2.3	.943

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Hypothesis 3C: Adoptees told of their adoptive status in planned manner, will be less likely than adoptees told accidentally, to have a lower sense of Biological Identity.

An independent t-test was conducted on mean Biological Identity for adoptees told by plan and adoptees told by accident. This revealed a significant difference in mean Biological Identity for the two groups ( $t = -5.07$ ;  $df = 910.14$ ;  $p < .001$ )<sup>5</sup>.

Adoptees told accidentally had lower Biological Identity than those told by plan.

Hypothesis 3C was supported.

Two further independent t-tests were conducted examining Curiosity and Abandonment. These showed a significant difference in mean Curiosity for the two groups ( $t = -3.26$ ;  $df = 912.29$ ;  $p < .002$ )<sup>5</sup>.

Table 23 gives details of the means and standard deviations on the three sub-scales for adoptees told accidentally and those told by plan.

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5. Separate variance estimates were used in tests lacking homogeneity of variance.



Adoptees told accidentally had lower Curiosity scores (a more curious) than those told by plan. No significant difference was found for Abandonment.

The absolute differences between the means were small; they were significant because of the large sample size.

Table 23

Means and Standard Deviations of the three sub-scales  
for adoptees told of adoptive status by accident or plan.

Manner of disclosure	No.	Biol. Ident.		Curiosity		Abandonment	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
by accident	476	2.2	.793	1.8	.760	2.4	.952
by plan	461	2.5	.907	2.0	.863	2.6	.888

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#### Manner of Disclosure of Adoptive Status:

To further facilitate the understanding of the role of the manner of telling an adoptee of his/her adoptive status the following additional information from the study is provided. The question asked to identify the manner of adoptive status disclosure varied for Study Ib and Study II/III. In Study Ib, 50 percent of subjects indicated that adoption disclosure was loving/caring, and 19 percent that it was matter-of-fact; in contrast 15 percent indicated the disclosure was hurtful; and 9 percent that it was accidental.

In Study II/III a series of questions addressed manner of disclosure. The first question provided categories such as accidentally, overheard, planned, can't remember. The majority (49%) indicated that the disclosure was planned; while 11 percent indicated it to be accidental; 5 percent that it was overheard; 5 percent that it was at the adoptee's insistence; 5 percent that a document was found; 7 percent couldn't remember; and 18 percent gave 'other' reports on the manner of disclosure.

While sex was not found to affect the likely manner of adoptive status disclosure, an effect for age was found. That is 65 percent of adoptees up to 20 years and 66 percent of those 21 - 30 years indicated that their disclosure was planned; while only 32 percent of those 41-50 years and 18 percent of those 51 plus years indicated that it was planned. If disclosure was over 31 years, 27 percent found out accidentally, overheard or found a document.

In Study II/III two further questions concerning manner of adoptive status disclosure were included. These were seven point semantic differential scales "loving-hateful" and "open-closed". These questions had a high number of missing cases (219) and are thus discussed cautiously. Males were slightly more likely to indicate the manner to be loving (only 6% scored on the hateful end of the scale); females on the other hand scored more frequently on the hateful end (13%). Age did not appear to influence males in their responses to this question, whereas in the case of females, age was a varying factor. Under 31 years only 4 percent of females indicated the hateful end, while this increased to 13 percent for those 31 - 40 years; 23 percent for those 41 - 50 years; and 49 percent for those 51 years plus.

For the "open-closed" question there appeared to a slight tendency for females to consider the disclosure to be more open than for males. In the case of age, for those adoptees over 31 years, only 45 percent indicated that the manner of disclosure was open; whereas for adoptees under 21 years, 85 percent indicated the disclosure to be open.

Hypothesis 4: Adoptees with a poor relationship with adoptive parents will have lower sense of belonging in biological time.

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) comprised two sub-scales: Care and Overprotection. Scores for each of these sub-scales were obtained for adoptive mother and father for each subject.

#### A. Adoptive Mother:

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A stepwise multiple regression indicated that both Adoptive Mother Care score (AMCARE) and Adoptive Mother Overprotection score (AMOP) were significant predictors of Biological Identity.

( $F_{2,940} = 92.43$ ;  $p < .0001$ ;  $R^2 = .1643$ ).

Sixteen percent of the variance in Biological Identity was accounted for by

AMCARE ( $R^2 = .06874$ ) and AMOP ( $R^2 = .0956$ ).

Hypothesis 4A was thus supported.

#### B. Adoptive Father:

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A stepwise multiple regression indicated that both Adoptive Father Overprotection score (AFOP) and Adoptive Father Care score (AFCARE) were significant predictors of Biological Identity.

( $F_{2,940} = 47.17960$ ;  $p < .0001$ ;  $R^2 = .09122$ ).

However only nine percent of the variance in Biological Identity was accounted for by

AFOP ( $R^2 = .01922$ ) and AFCARE ( $R^2 = .07160$ ).

Hypothesis 4B was thus supported.

#### Relationship with Adoptive Parents:

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The following additional information on the adoptee's relationship with his/her adoptive parents is provided.

More than half of the adoptees in Study Ib indicated that they were unable to discuss adoption with their adoptive parents. In contrast only 38 percent of the subjects in Study II/III indicated that discussion was not possible. In Study II/III adoptees were given the choice of all, some or very little discussion for a positive answer to the question: 26 percent indicated all; 21 percent some; and 15 percent very little discussion.

### Adoptee Identity Measure:

The final version of the Adoptee Identity Measure, with guidelines for administration and scoring are provided in Appendix 13. Norms and standard deviations for the total sample of Study II/III are provided in Appendix 14. These are outlined for males and females, in age categories.

This study needs to be replicated on another sample of adoptees. It is very clear however that the pattern of significant differences is remarkable in its uniformity. Every hypothesis was confirmed. Even though the size of the significance in some cases was small, the consistency of the results is considerable, and provides support for the overall theoretical framework on which the measure and hypotheses were framed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

## DISCUSSION

The tasks of this thesis as outlined in the Introduction were threefold:

- A. The development of a model of adoptee identity development and change.
- B. The development of a measure of adoptee identity.
- C. The examination of the relationships between adoptee identity and decision to search; self esteem; age and manner of adoption disclosure; and relationship with adoptive parents.

### Development of Model of Adoptee Identity.

Review of the adoptee identity literature leads to the development of a model of adoptee identity development and change, which is based on the importance of the following variables:

- Relationship with adoptive parents;
- Age at adoptive disclosure;
- Manner of adoptive disclosure;
- Biological Identity;
- Self Esteem;
- Alienation;
- Information about biological origins; and
- Decision to search.

Two alternative versions of a model which encompasses these variables have been outlined in the Introduction. These are the Credulous Model and the Sceptical Model. Both these models are fundamentally the same, the major difference between the models is the direction of the causality of Biological Identity with Self Esteem and Alienation.

Much work went into the development of the model. This involved first the prediction of the relationships between the sub-components identified. Secondly, the development

of a measure of adoptee identity was fundamental to the testing of this model, because without it no qualification or quantification of the role of Biological Identity would be possible.

The results of this study have shown clearly that the overall model is accurate. The relationships between the variables outlined above, were examined via the setting of four hypotheses. All four Hypotheses were confirmed. In addition the reliability and validity of the Adoptee Identity Measure have been clearly established.

It is thus apparent that the overall model is soundly supported by this study. The relationships were first hypothesized and then confirmed, demonstrating that the overall framework on which they were based, was accurately perceiving adoptee identity development and change. The only aspect of the model which was not tested was the direction of causality between Biological Identity and Self Esteem and Alienation. That is, which of the alternative forms of the model (credulous or sceptical) is correct? This was beyond the scope of this study and will thus need to be tested in a future study.

#### Development of a Measure of Adoptee Identity.

A measure of adoptee identity has been developed. This psychometric test was based in theoretical rationale and produced using a large (943 adoptees) national sample.

The test development was based on recommended procedures for test construction (e.g. Crocker and Algina, 1986). These were outlined in the Method Chapter (see p. 59). This process resulted in the development of the two scale, 25 item Adoptee Identity Test which is detailed in Appendix 13. The test has high internal consistency and validity. The two scales have been labelled Biological Identity and Curiosity. A third scale, Abandonment emerged in the analysis but was excluded from the final test, because it lacked various kinds of validity (i.e. content and construct).

### The Test Construction Procedure:

This research was planned in three stages, and was designed to cover the comprehensive steps of test design as outlined by Crocker and Algina (1986).

In addition, the guidelines of Gorsuch (1983) regarding the use of Factor Analysis to replicate factors across random samples of individuals, was adhered to closely in the development of the test.

That is, the study incorporated sound methodology in all stages of the test development. The methodology was designed to maximize the strength and accuracy of the test developed.

The development of the Adoptee Identity Measure has been described in detail in the Method and Results chapters. Three stable factors, based on 30 items were thus extracted.

### The Three Factors:

The literature, and the early exploratory work with adoptees in discussion groups, suggested that adoptee identity was comprised of at least four factors: Biological Identity; Genealogical Concern; Alienation; and Curiosity. Integration was added to this group following Study Ib. However, the results of Study II/III indicate that the primary factors underlying adoptee identity are Biological Identity, Curiosity and Abandonment.

Biological Identity: The Biological Identity factor comprises 15 items. The thrust of this factor is the adoptees concern with his/her biological-genetic knowledge of self, and sense of belonging in biological time. This factor accounted for 32.8 percent of the variance, and comprised the largest number of items. Because the items reflect the concept as discussed by



Sants (1964), Triseliotis (1973), Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1978) and Stoneman, Thompson and Webber (1980), it is proposed that the factor as a scale can measure Biological Identity: the adoptees' sense of belonging in biological time.

It is not surprising that Genealogical Concern items would load on the Biological Identity factor as Genealogical Concern was defined as the individuals concern with Biological Identity; and it was recognized from the outset that it was likely that these two would be very highly correlated. The Integration items were also addressing the integration of environment and hereditary, and as such were concerned with belonging in biological time. It appears that a single large factor which blends these aspects of biological identity is accounting for the variance rather than smaller more specific factors.

Curiosity: The Curiosity factor comprises 11 items.

The thrust of this factor concerns the adoptees' interest in obtaining information about biological origins and birth family. This factor accounted for 6.0 percent of the variance, and was the second largest factor. The factor as a scale is proposed as a measure of adoptee curiosity, and is consistent with the literature (e.g. Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies, 1980).

The 11 items which comprise the Curiosity scale were drawn mainly from the Curiosity category (7 items) with the remaining (4) being drawn from the Genealogical Concern category.

Abandonment: The Abandonment factor is the smallest comprising only 5 items. The thrust of this factor concerns fear of abandonment, rejection, and separation from people. As such it forms a specific subset of the predicted factor: alienation.

It was predicted that a general alienation factor, concerning belonging with others, would be extracted, as had been the case in Study I. This did not occur, and the concept of a sense of belonging with other people, did not emerge as a coherent theme for this subject sample. All the items which formed the Alienation factor in Study I were included in some form in Study II/III: not one of these original items loaded on the Abandonment factor; and only one item ("I feel I really don't belong.") loaded on another factor (Biological Identity). Thus an entirely new group of items, from the Alienation pool, formed the new scale. All these new items had been added to the item pool following Study I.

The Study I factor, Alienation, was very much concerned with the individuals sense of belonging with others. It is particularly interesting that the abandonment concept emerged as this has been proposed elsewhere but has not been widely discussed. Brown (Winkler, Brown & van Keppel, in press) in reviewing the concept of fear of abandonment considers it to be at the center of the adoption experience for the adoptee. He views this fear of abandonment as a dominant life theme from birth onwards and unique to the adoption experience. Lifton (1979) claims that adoptees see themselves as shy, withdrawn, afraid of rejection and conflict, anxious to please others, and reluctantly submissive. These are all manifestations of the fear of abandonment. It appears that this particular type of alienation is specific to adoptees, and that the Abandonment sub-scale is measuring these feelings.

It should be noted that the Alienation factor was initially found on a sample of adoptees who had had contact whereas Study II/III was a sample including also non searchers, and searchers without contact. Thus the failure to find Alienation in Study II/III

could be an artifact of contact. This explanation is weakened however by the fact that the items were present but did not form even a small factor.

The Abandonment factor while relatively small was replicated exactly from Sample 1 to Sample 2. It needs to be noted that what was being sought from the pool of Alienation items was a factor concerning belonging with others. A domain of items to test specifically for the Abandonment factor was not put together, because the previous research had not indicated Abandonment. With a small domain of items it is not surprising that the Abandonment factor comprised only five items.

Another point which needs to be mentioned here is that Abandonment while a factor is not really a factor of identity. The factor is so different to the original Alienation factor, and to the concept of Alienation as discussed by (Dean, 1961; Seeman, 1959) as to require considerable further examination. It is an interesting constellation of items but it is quite different to Alienation as earlier defined, and has little face value as a general Alienation factor. Closer examination of both Alienation and Abandonment needs to be undertaken.

#### Overview of Three Factors:

Five factors were predicted in the establishment of the domain of items for Study II/III, but only three were found. Close examination of the factors however has shown that Abandonment is fundamentally different to Alienation as earlier defined. Abandonment is viewed as a specific type of Alienation, but cannot be examined in great detail in this study because the size of the Factor (5 items) is too small. This will need to be examined in a future study.

The other two factors (i.e. Biological Identity and Curiosity) on inspection can be seen to be the emergence of two large factors instead of four smaller ones. Biological Identity, Genealogical Concern and Integration were

acknowledged to be related to each other, the result shows that they are so related as to prevent the separation into sub-components. Curiosity items were mainly from the Curiosity pool but included four items from Genealogical Concern.

These results for Biological Identity and Curiosity are consistent with the model of adoptee identity outlined in this study. The difference is that the components of adoptee identity have been found to be two large rather than four small ones. The two factors are consistent with the literature which has consistently discussed Biological Identity and Curiosity as important facets of adoptee identity (i.e. Sants, 1964; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1975; Slaytor, 1986).

Abandonment is still within the Alienation domain of items but is addressing a specific sub-component of Alienation.

The results show that the two primary components of adoptee identity are Biological Identity and Curiosity, which is consistent with the literature. The finding that Alienation for adoptees was not related to belonging with others but to the more specific fear of abandonment as suggested by Brown (Winkler, Brown & van Keppel, in press) and Lifton (1979) points to an important distinction which will need to be further studied.

#### Reliability and Validity:

The reliability of the measure was tested using Coefficient alpha which revealed high internal consistency for the three factors together, plus for the three scales individually.

The method of the test construction included a test of the validity of the factor configuration. The Adoptee Identity Measure was constructed on Sample 1, then the factor structure confirmed on Sample 2. The structure was finally confirmed on the total population (viz Samples 1 and 2 combined).

The validity was also checked via Discriminant Function Analysis. This confirmed that each sub-scale (Biological Identity, Curiosity, and Abandonment) could individually differentiate between the three search status groups. The Discriminant Function Analysis further indicated that Curiosity and Biological Identity were fairly highly correlated. The significance and F ratios of both these scales were high, while that for Abandonment was lower and less clear cut.

The content, predictive and construct validity of the Adoptee Identity Measure has thus been demonstrated to be very high.

Test-retest reliability was not tested in this study, but in view of the use of the suggested use of the measure in studies examining adoptee identity before and after reunion; and at different stages in adoptees lives it is necessary for this to be examined in a future study.

This study is obviously a first step in the construction and use of the Adoptee Identity Measure, but the high validity and reliability found suggest that further use of the test in research is warranted.

#### Final Adoptee Identity Measure:

Abandonment was found in the Discriminant Function Analysis to be quite different to Curiosity and Biological Identity. The scale Abandonment is not recommended for inclusion in the Adoptee Identity Measure. The main reasons for this are:

- a. Abandonment is quite different to the predicted factor alienation.
- b. The nature of Abandonment does not seem to be directly related to identity issues, this is supported by Abandonment forming a separate function in the discriminant function analysis.

Thus the Adoptee Identity Measure is composed of the two scales: Biological Identity and Curiosity. The total number of items is twenty five (see Appendix 13)

Ability of the Measure to discriminate between search categories:

The literature has consistently suggested that there is a fundamental difference between adoptees in terms of their search status (e.g. Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Kowal & Schilling, 1985). That is, that adoptees who do not search are different from those who do search; and further that those who do search and have contact are fundamentally changed after the contact.

A major purpose of the Adoptee Identity Measure was to be able to provide a means of objectively discriminating between adoptees who are searchers, and adoptees who are not searchers. It was also hoped to be able to discriminate between searching adoptees who had had contact and those who had not.

Results indicate that the Adoptee Identity Measure can predict searchers and non searchers. The test was not able however, to (successfully) predict searchers with contact from those without contact. The measure is thus sensitive to search, but not to contact. Re-examination of the six search categories shows that the searchers-contact group varies considerably from those just establishing contact, to those who have had contact for many years. Examination of the current level of information known about birth family by searchers (both with and without contact) shows that only 69 percent of those who had established contact had had a reunion with birth mothers (53% indicated birth mother to be the person with whom contact was most wanted), a further 39 percent indicated contact with anyone was desired. Only 18 percent of those who had established contact, had had reunion with birth fathers. Clearly contact is not necessarily complete, simply with contact with one member of the birth family. This contact may

stimulate desire for contact with others. Certainly this is strongly suggested from the results of the Reunion Study (Winkler, Midford, van Keppel, Zubrick & Moses, 1986).

There is also considerable variation between searchers; from those adoptees who search continuously, and with great energy to those who merely register on a Contact Register (so that if birth parent(s) seek contact they are available). Others search intermittently. There is clearly a difference between these adoptees in terms of their perceived urgency to search for birth family.

There are a number of possible reasons why the measure is unable to predict between searchers with or without contact. First, contact for the purpose of this study has been defined as contact of any kind with birth family. This contact can vary from one telephone call, or letter, to a face to face reunion with substantial long term contact after the reunion. That is, the adoptee's contact can vary from a minute amount (even just the information that the person sought is dead) to long term close relationships with many members of birth family. Second, the contact can also vary from contact with one member (mother, father, sibling, grandparent, etc.) to contact with the whole extended family. Further, the contact may not yet be with the person with whom contact is most desired. This can be because the person is dead, the person has yet to be located, the person refuses contact, to name but a few.

It is obviously likely that such variations would have the potential to affect the adoptees' perception of the contact. It will be necessary in the future to examine the effects on the adoptee of the stages of contact (from first approach to the establishment of long term relationships); the extent of the contact (from one member to the whole extended family); and the preferences for contact. It was beyond the scope of this study to do this, but it is recognized that for some adoptees, defined in this study as "searchers with contact" (because some degree of contact

had been established) their perception of the contact might be that there was still a long way to go; that is that they were still searching for more contact with one or more people.

The literature has consistently suggested a fundamental difference between searchers prior to contact and searchers post contact, and analysis of variance on Biological Identity and Curiosity scores for the three search categories confirmed this difference. However, the discriminant function analysis found that while the two scales were able to predict non searchers and searchers they could not differentiate between searchers with or without contact.

This confusing result indicates that the definition of searchers with and without contact needs to be refined further. It may well be the case that Searchers cannot be meaningfully divided into just two groups. For future research the following four categories are recommended:

- a. searchers-no-contact-passive
- b. searchers-no-contact-active
- c. searchers-contact-incomplete
- d. searchers-contact-complete

The rationale for this categorization is that searchers without contact form at least two groups of those actively searching; and those interested, but more passively searching, for instance registered on a contact register. For those searchers who have achieved contact the most basic difference is between those who have completed their search, whatever was found, and those who have had some contact, but still see themselves as searching for further information, or contact.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the scales Biological Identity and Curiosity can be used to predict non searcher from searcher, but that the scales cannot predict searchers with contact from searchers without contact. Further refinement of the categorization of searchers into subgroups, along the lines suggested here will be necessary before this can be attempted.



The results do not support the simplistic notion advanced in the literature that there is a dramatic change in all searching adoptees post contact, compared to pre contact (Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Stoneman, Thompson & Webber, 1980; and Block, 1981). It may be that there is a change, but the results of this study reveal that it is not simply contact alone which effects this change. Such a change is almost certainly a combination of who is contacted; the nature of the contact; the duration of the contact; and whether further individuals or information is sought, i.e. is the search now complete?

Similarly there are differences between adoptees who are not searching (14% of total sample). Some adoptees claimed to have no interest in their birth family (5%) and others said that they had made no effort to search, but indicated that there was some interest (9%). It is likely that there is a fundamental difference between those adoptees with NO interest in search and those who, for whatever reason, have not yet made the effort to search. Many of the subjects in this category made comments to the effect that they did not wish to upset adoptive parents. The total number of non searchers, despite considerable efforts to recruit adoptees in this category, was relatively small, a larger sample is needed to explore the differences between non searchers without interest, and those who have not yet made the effort.

The discriminant function analysis revealed that the scales Curiosity and Biological Identity were closely related to each other, forming Function Number One. The scale Curiosity actually accounted for the majority of variance in predicting search status and is thus the scale best able to discriminate between searchers and non-searchers. This is perhaps an obvious result in the sense that if curiosity is high it is not surprising that a person will search. Function Number Two comprised the

Abandonment scale and while significant, is vastly less clear in its relation to search category than the other two scales.

#### The Role of Sex and Age in Interpretation and Predictive Power of the Adoptee Identity Measure:

Previous research has paid scant attention to the artifacts of their samples. This study looked specifically at the effects of age and sex in the use of the Adoptee Identity Measure, to establish if the differences found between the search categories on the scales could be accounted for by age or sex.

The results of this research have shown clearly that the present age of the adoptee does not increase the predictive power of either scale regarding search status.

No sex differences were found in the ratio of males to females over all the search categories (see Table 16) and this was confirmed by post-hoc analysis of the means. Sex was found to be related to the Curiosity scale; females were more curious than males. No other sex differences were found. In view of the non significant difference in sex across search categories there is no methodological problem with the significant result on the Curiosity scale. Females appear to be rating themselves as more curious than males.

#### Development of the Adoptee Identity Measure: Conclusion.

The development of a 25 item, self administered, pen and paper, Adoptee Identity Measure, comprised of two scales was achieved. The two scales, Biological Identity and Curiosity, are consistent with the literature on adoptee identity, and make logical sense.

Tests of the reliability and validity of the test showed it to be psychometrically sound. The confirmation of the hypotheses strengthened the construct validity of the measure.

The test as a whole and the sub-scales individually can predict searchers and non searchers on the basis of scores. The scale which has the most variance overall is Biological Identity. However in the case of predicting search status the Curiosity scale accounts for the most variance, and is most important. The scale is at its best in predicting searchers (both with and without contact) doing this successfully in over 80 percent of cases.

Details on how to administer and score the test are provided in Appendix 13. Appendix 14 provides details of norms and standard deviations for the whole sample.

A third scale Abandonment, while significant and accounting for an acceptable amount of the variance, was excluded from the final test because it did not appear to be measuring identity. It is an interesting scale however, and deserves to be further examined in future research.

There is thus substantial evidence that the measure is a good measure of adoptee identity. The various uses of the measure are outlined in the following sections.

#### Use of the Adoptee Identity Measure to Test Hypotheses:

The four Hypotheses were generated from the theoretical model of adoptee identity developed. The model was based on the literature and other research. Thus the use of the Adoptee Identity Measure in the testing of Hypotheses was a further test of the validity of the Measure. The Hypotheses were designed to test the theoretical relationships between adoptee identity and other variables. That all Hypotheses were confirmed indicates that the theoretical rationale is supported; strengthens the construct validity; and indicates that the Adoptee Identity Measure is measuring adoptee identity.

The testing of the causality of Biological Identity and Self Esteem was not undertaken, due to the constraints of the study. This obviously needs to be examined. In addition the role of Abandonment and Alienation needs to be examined in a future study.

Each Hypothesis will now be examined.

Hypothesis 1:            Those adoptees who have decided to  
search for member(s) of birth family  
will have less sense of belonging in  
biological time than those who have  
decided not to search.

Hypothesis 1 was supported. Searchers who had had contact were excluded from the analysis because it was thought that contact may have an effect on the dependent variable. Searchers were found to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time than non searchers. This finding confirms the notion of search being a response to lack of knowledge of one's origins and identity. In addition searchers were found to be more curious, and to have more sense of abandonment, than non searchers.

The literature has suggested that females are more likely to be searchers (e.g. Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Kowal & Schilling, 1985) than males; this was not supported in this study. Females rated themselves as more curious compared to males, but as females were not different to males in the ratios of search status it appears that the difference is in the female's use of the Curiosity scale, not in their assignment to search category. It is recommended that both the scores for the Adoptee Identity Measure be examined in the use of the measure, this is particularly important for use with females. Similarly age did not contribute to the decision to search.

Previous research had paid scant attention to the role of age and sex in decision to search, except to report that more females than males were interested in search. The results of this study suggest that care must be taken in interpreting females statements about search, as they rate their curiosity higher than males, while being represented in the same proportions in search categories as males.

Possible explanations for females rating their Curiosity higher than males could include their maternal role and the need to answer questions asked by children such as "where do I come from?"; their traditional role of homemaker and encourager of family contact; the fact that females have been less bound by pressures of career than males (at least in the past), and thus have had more time to be curious; and females would be more likely than males to identify with the person responsible for their relinquishment (birth mother) and with the process of pregnancy, birth and beyond.

- Hypothesis 2A: Adoptees who have decided to search will have lower self esteem than those adoptees who have decided not to search.
- Hypothesis 2B: Adoptees who have lower self esteem will have less sense of belonging in biological time.

These Hypotheses were both supported. The qualitative literature on adoptees has frequently noted that self esteem is associated with concerns about the adoptee's identity (Sants, 1964; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978) and this relationship has been confirmed in this study. That is searchers have lower self esteem than non searchers; and Self Esteem and Biological Identity are directly correlated.

The validity of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is well documented (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Hoge & McCarthy, 1984; Demo, 1985) and the clear relationship of the Adoptee Identity Measure with it, adds further weight to the validity of the Adoptee Identity Measure.

What has not been possible to test in this project however, is knowing that Biological Identity and Self Esteem are directly correlated: is Biological Identity the cause or effect of Self Esteem? This question requires an

answer to determine whether the Credulous or Sceptical version of the adoptee identity model developed in the Introduction is correct. This question will be the subject of a future research project.

The implications of the relationship between Self Esteem and Biological Identity for clinical practice would include possible discrepancies between the levels of Self Esteem and Biological Identity. More importantly the causality question is essential to establish whether the sceptical or credulous version of the model is correct. This has been discussed in the Introduction (see pages 50-51). Clinical practice should vary substantially depending upon which alternative is found to be correct.

Hypothesis 3A: Adoptees told of their adoptive status after age 10 years, will be more likely than adoptees told earlier, to have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

Hypothesis 3B: Adoptees told of their adoptive status in an hateful manner, will be more likely, than adoptees told in a loving manner, to have a lower sense of Biological Identity.

Hypothesis 3C: Adoptees told of their adoptive status in a planned manner, will be less likely than adoptees told accidentally, to have a lower sense of Biological Identity.

All three Hypotheses were supported. The support of these Hypotheses confirms what many in the literature have been saying, largely on the basis of anecdotal evidence, that age and manner of adoption disclosure affects the adoptee.

### Age at Adoptive Status Disclosure:

Adoptees told when over 10 years of age of their adoptive status had lower Biological Identity than those told when younger. This dichotomy between adoptees told 10 years and younger, and those told when over 10 years has been well documented in the literature (e.g. Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1978; Kowal & Schilling, 1985). Children told when 10 years of age or younger are provided with critical information about themselves and their identity prior to the difficult adolescent period of individual identity formation. As Swender and Hartenstein (1979) observe the adoptive parents attempts to deny the reality and difference of adoptive status by failure to disclose this vital personal information to their adopted child can result in feelings of mistrust, suspicion, and anger in the adoptee at disclosure. This coupled with the demands of adolescence to develop an individual identity places adoptees told in the 11 to 20 age group in a potential identity risk group. Those told after the period of identity formation, that is over 20 years (approximately) are maximally disadvantaged in that they must develop a new identity for themselves. Without information this can prove to be extremely traumatic for older adoptees. The other aspect of late disclosure is that they have not been provided with vital personal information by the very people (viz their adoptive parents) in whom they have usually placed most trust. This is both a betrayal of their rights and a statement of their child-adult status.

The results show a tendency for more females to have been told up to 10 years of age; 70 percent of females compared to 58 percent of males. Why girls should be more often told when younger than males, is not known. There was also a tendency for older adoptees to have been informed at older ages; only 30

percent of adoptees 51 years and older were told when 10 or less compared to 96 percent of adoptees aged 20 years or less. Part of this difference can be explained by changes in adoption practice.

Specifically adoptive parents in the past 20 years or more have been advised to tell their adoptees of their adoptive status when the child is young. This was not the case 30 years or more ago.

A difference between search status and age told of adoptive status was also noted. There was a tendency for non searchers to be told when younger than searchers, and for searchers to be told when older. This is consistent with age told being related to Biological identity.

#### Manner of Adoptive Status Disclosure:

Perhaps not surprisingly adoptees told of their adoptive status in a hateful manner had less sense of belonging in biological time than those told lovingly. To be told of something as important as your adoptive status in a hateful manner would not prepare the adoptee for the complex task of incorporation of adoptive status in individual identity. The manner of adoptive status disclosure is obviously also closely related to the person revealing the information. Being told in a hateful way by adoptive parent(s) would probably be more traumatic than being told in this way by a stranger. The results indicate that 70 percent of the adoptees in the study were told by one or both parents. Younger adoptees were also more likely to have been informed by one or both adoptive parents.

The manner of adoptive status disclosure has been pinpointed as an important predictor of later problems in adoptees by a number of writers (e.g. Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Triseliotis, 1973; Brodzinsky, Braff & Singer, 1980; Raynor, 1980). Manner of disclosure has not however been linked previously with Biological Identity, only with search status.



Curiosity and Abandonment also revealed significant differences in manner of disclosure; those told in a hateful way were more curious and had more sense of abandonment than those told lovingly.

Adoptees told by accident were found to have lower Biological Identity than those told by plan. Similarly adoptees told accidentally were found to have greater curiosity than those told by plan.

Both these measures of manner of disclosure are related to Biological Identity and Curiosity in the same way. The Adoptee Identity Measure is thus able to differentiate on both scales between adoptees, according to the manner of disclosure.

Males were slightly more likely than females to indicate the manner of disclosure to be loving. For females the older the adoptee the more likely they were to report hateful disclosure.

The implications of the relationship between age told and manner of adoption disclosure for clinical practice are important. A clinician working with an adoptee should establish the details of disclosure of adoption status early in the intervention. Self Esteem of those told poorly is most likely chronically low and will require a different approach than self esteem on a temporary low. Furthermore, if the adoptee has been told during or after adolescence, it is likely that their sense of identity and self esteem will require considerable attention, because in these cases the adoptee's can feel stripped of knowledge of, and confidence in, themselves. If an adoptee has been told when 10 or less and in a loving, planned manner the levels of Self Esteem and Biological Identity should be good, therefore if an adoptee presents with low Self Esteem and Biological Identity it is probable that the problem relates to an issue beyond childhood, and possibly adoption.

Hypothesis 4: Adoptees with a poor relationship with

adoptive parents will have a lower sense of belonging in biological time.

The measure used to assess the relationship between the adoptee and adoptive parents was the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). This measure comprises two subscales: Care and Overprotection. Each of these subscales was completed for both adoptive parents. In interpreting these results it is important to note that the adoptee was asked to answer the PBI as "you remember your mother/father in your first 16 years." It is quite possible that an adoptee's recall could be affected by the present situation with regard to perceptions of his/her parents. Further, memories of 10, 20 or 30 plus years ago are subject to error. A good parent bond is defined by this Instrument as high care and low overprotection.

The Hypothesis was supported for both adoptive parents but not in exactly the same manner.

In the case of the adoptive mother the care scale was the most important. Both scales were found to be measuring different aspects of the relationship and the two scales accounted together for sixteen percent of the variance in Biological Identity. In the case of the adoptive father the two scales were again found to be different but this time overprotection was the most important. The amount of variance accounted for by the two scales was only nine percent. These results suggest that the nature of the relationships is different for mothers and fathers but that both are related to Biological Identity.

In view of the lower proportion of the variance in Biological Identity accounted for by adoptive fathers it is recommended that only the scale for adoptive mothers needs to be given to adoptees in future research.

## Overview of the Hypotheses:

What then are the main effects which can be drawn from the support of these hypotheses?

The first point is that the theoretical rationale on which the hypotheses were based, has been supported by the results. Each Hypothesis was designed to examine a particular aspect of the model. Support of the Hypotheses is thus support of the model. All four Hypotheses were confirmed. That is the overall model of adoptee identity development and change outlined in the Introduction has been consistently supported.

Second the predictive power of the Adoptee Identity Measure has been validated in its demonstrated capacity to discriminate between searchers and non searchers. The Measure is not however, able to discriminate between the two sub-categories of searchers defined in this study (searchers with contact and searchers without contact).

Third a direct relationship was established between the two scales of the Adoptee Identity Measure and the variables Self Esteem; age and manner of adoption disclosure; and relationship with adoptive parents (particularly of mothers). All these relationships need to be replicated in a future study.

The only aspect of the model which was not tested, because it was beyond the scope of this study to do so, was the causality of Biological Identity and Self Esteem. That is, is Biological Identity the cause or effect of Self Esteem? The answer to this question is required, to determine which of the credulous and sceptical alternatives to the adoptee identity model is correct. The overall model has stood up very well.

As discussed in the Introduction, support for either the credulous or sceptical alternatives to the adoptee identity model will have significant implications for research and clinical practice. It is thus very important that the issue of the causality of Biological Identity and Self Esteem be determined in future research.

### Summary and Conclusion:

The study has produced a reliable, valid measure of adoptee identity, comprising two related but separate scales: Biological Identity and Curiosity.

The Biological Identity Scale is not affected by the age or sex of the adoptees. The Curiosity Scale is also unaffected by the age of the adoptee, but is affected by the sex of the adoptee. Females rate themselves as more curious than males. There is no difference for males and females however on search status.

The hypotheses were set to test the findings observed in other studies of adoptees. That is there is a significant difference between searchers and non searchers; between adoptees with low and high self esteem; between adoptees reporting low or high quality relationships with adoptive parents, and adoptee identity levels. The answers provided here confirm that there are such differences and that they are significant. In addition the age of adoptees at disclosure, and manner of disclosure was found to be significantly related to adoptee identity as measured by the Adoptee Identity Measure.

The confirmation of these hypotheses is important in validating the Adoptee Identity Measure as a sound measure of adoptee identity. It is also important that these results be replicated in a future study.

The reports in the literature of studies examining and interpreting the role of adoptee identity have been largely supported by this study. The relationships between biological identity and variables such as self esteem, relationship with adoptive parents, age of disclosure of adoption status, and manner of disclosure; which previous researchers have claimed to exist, without a measure, have been supported by this study.

The previous literature however, has examined these relationships largely in piecemeal fashion. No other study has attempted to draw the relationships into a coherent whole, which not only explains the situation for searching

adoptees but which also includes non searching adoptees. This is extremely important as it has been clearly shown that only a small minority of adoptees search (e.g. Triseliotis, 1973), while the vast majority (over 90%) do not search. Any understanding of the adoptee should include the whole population of adoptees, not a minority group. The model outlined here, brings together all the various viewpoints into a meaningful whole. This means that any future research will have a model to test and extend. The model also recognizes the unique and extra dimension which adoptees need to accommodate in their identity development and change.

The model of adoptee identity outlined will permit clinicians and others working with adoptees as well as the adoptees themselves and their families to understand the relationships involved in adoptee identity and the effects of particular variables. Understanding the process and dynamics of adoptee identity development and change, will assist in defining and tackling particular problems.

It will also be vital to determine whether the credulous or sceptical alternative of the overall model is supported (causality of Biological Identity and Self Esteem), as this will have significant implications for clinical practice and research as outlined previously. This will need to wait for further research.

Another important result of the existence of a model of adoptee identity development and change will be the acknowledgement that biological identity and curiosity are dimensions for all adoptees, not just for those searching. It is not whether biological identity and curiosity are present in adoptees but the importance of them.

The sense of belonging with others, alienation, was not found in this study. A particular aspect of alienation was found instead: Abandonment. The relationship between alienation and abandonment needs to be further examined in future studies. The role of alienation and/or abandonment in the model of adoptee identity will also need to be examined. This was not possible in this study.

A significant contribution of this research project will be the provision of a psychometrically sound measure of adoptee identity which can be used in future research. Such a measure will enable the comparison of the results of different studies, at present made very difficult by the diverse, and often subjective means used to measure or assess adoptee identity. The measure will also permit the further examination of the model of adoptee identity development and change.

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**APPENDIX 1****25 Items Used in Stage Ib Study by Category**

### Biological Identity Items

- \* Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.
- \* I feel cut off from my ancestry.
- \* Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.
- \* I wonder who I really am.
- \* I feel I have no roots.
- \* I feel I have a ghost in the background who influences what I do.
- \* I have a sense of incompleteness.
- \* Because I don't know where I fit in my family tree, I don't have a sense of continuity.

### Alienation Items

- \* I feel differently from other people because I am adopted.
- \* I don't feel I really belong.
- \* It is easy for me to trust people.
- \* It is easy for me to feel close with people.
- \* I feel like a second class person.
- \* I worry that people will know I am different.
- \* Honesty is especially important to me.
- \* I always like to know where I stand.

### Curiosity Items

- \* I wonder who I look like.
- \* I wonder if my natural mother has the same interests as me.
- \* I wonder about how I was born.
- \* I want to know whether I have any relatives.
- \* I wonder if my natural mother thinks about things the way I do.

### Concern Items

- \* Not knowing who my biological parents are is of little concern to me.
- \* Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.



## APPENDIX 2

### Study 1b Questionnaire

please circle the number or numbers that best correspond with your answer to each question. Some questions require you to write your answer. Please write as much descriptive information as you wish on separate sheets of paper.

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

CODE  
NUMBER

CARD NO.

Are you a member of an adoption support group? Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

If yes, which one ? .....

How many children were there in your adoptive family? .....

Which child were you? First ..... 1  
Second ..... 2  
Third ..... 3  
Other ..... 4

Your sex Male ..... 1  
Female ..... 2

Your ethnic background Australian ..... 1  
European ..... 2  
Aboriginal ..... 3  
Asian ..... 4  
Other ..... 5

Your present marital status Single ..... 1  
Married ..... 2  
Separated ..... 3  
Divorced ..... 4  
Widowed ..... 5  
De facto ..... 6

Your occupation Home duties ..... 1  
Unskilled ..... 2  
Semi-skilled ..... 3  
Managerial/  
professional ..... 4  
Unemployed/student ..... 5

BEFORE SEARCHING, WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR ADOPTION ?

How old were you when you were adopted? ..... 1  
Don't know ..... 2

Who arranged your adoption? Private ..... 1  
Doctor ..... 2  
D.C.W. (or equivalent) ... 3  
Lawyer ..... 4  
Minister of Religion ..... 5  
Other ..... 6  
Don't know ..... 7

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

Did your adoptive parents know  
or meet your relinquishing parents  
before you were adopted?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 3

☐ 22

PRIOR TO YOUR SEARCH

To what extent do you believe each of the following statements applied  
to you before you started to search.

Please circle only 1 number per statement.

I felt different from other  
people because I am adopted.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

☐ 23

Not knowing my genetic inheritance  
left me uncertain about how my  
life would unfold.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 24

I felt cut off from my ancestry.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 25

I felt I really didn't belong.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 26

It was easy for me to feel  
close with people.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 27

It was easy for me to trust  
people.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 28

I wondered who I looked like.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 29

My biological parents were of  
little concern to me.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 30

I wondered about how I was born.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 31

I felt comfortable about being  
the child of both my adoptive  
and biological parents.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 32

Being adopted meant a major part  
of my life was missing.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 33

Not knowing my genetic inheritance  
caused me uncertainty regarding my  
susceptibility to medical complaints  
and illnesses.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 34

I wondered if my natural mother  
thought about things the way I did.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 35

I wondered if my natural mother  
had the same interests as I did.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐ 36

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

I wondered who I really was.

I wanted to know if I had any relatives.

I felt I had no roots.

I felt that I had a ghost in the background that influenced what I did.

I had a sense of incompleteness.

I felt like a second class person.

I worried that people would know I was different.

Because I didn't know where I fitted in my family tree, I had no sense of continuity.

I wanted to meet another person who shared my biology.

Honesty was especially important to me.

I always liked to know where I stood.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ADOPTION

How old were you when you found out you were adopted?

- Less than 10 years ..... 1
- 11 - 20 years ..... 2
- 21 - 30 years ..... 3
- 31 - 40 years ..... 4
- 41 - 50 years ..... 5
- 51 - 60 years ..... 6
- 60 + years ..... 7

Who informed you of your adoptive status?

- Adoptive mother ..... 1
- Adoptive father ..... 2
- Adoptive siblings ..... 3
- Other relatives ..... 4
- Friends/acquaintances ..... 5
- Overheard it ..... 6
- Government Official ..... 7
- Other ..... 8

In what manner were you told?

- Loving/caring ..... 1
- Matter-of-fact ..... 2
- Hurtful ..... 3
- Accidentally(eg.overheard) ..... 4

48

49

50

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

Were you able to discuss all aspects  
of your adoption with your adoptive  
parents?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

☐ 51

If yes, were they

Understanding ..... 1  
Helpful ..... 2  
Uncooperative ..... 3  
Hurt ..... 4  
Obstructive ..... 5  
Fearful ..... 6  
Other ..... 7

☐ 62  
☐ 63  
☐ 64  
☐ 65  
☐ 66  
☐ 67  
☐ 68

If no, was it because

You were afraid they  
would be blunt ..... 1  
you knew they would  
not be cooperative ..... 2  
they refused to discuss it ..... 3  
other ..... 4

☐ 69  
☐ 70  
☐ 71  
☐ 72

Before your reunion, what did you  
think were your natural mother's  
reasons for placing you for  
adoption :

her physical health ..... 1  
her emotional health ..... 2  
she was too young ..... 3  
she was too old ..... 4  
she lacked finance ..... 5  
she was single ..... 6  
family pressure ..... 7  
social pressure ..... 8  
the wishes of your natural  
father ..... 9  
to provide for your security ...10  
I had no idea ..... 11  
other (.....) ..... 12

☐ 63  
☐ 64  
☐ 65  
☐ 66  
☐ 67  
☐ 68  
☐ 69  
☐ 70  
☐ 71  
☐ 72  
☐ 73  
☐ 74

Did your adoptive parents  
attempt to persuade you not  
to search by :

telling you not to search ..... 1  
making subtle remarks ..... 2  
reminded you of the gratitude  
and love you owed them ..... 3  
making you feel ungrateful  
or unloving if you wanted  
to search ..... 4  
other ..... 5

☐ 75  
☐ 76  
☐ 77  
☐ 78  
☐ 79

Did you believe that their wishes  
(whether to search or not)  
should come first?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

☐ 80

Did you feel guilty when  
you did search?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Not applicable ..... 3

end of card 1

☐ 6

OFFICE USE  
ONLYTHE SEARCH

Did you initiate the search for your original parents ?	Yes .....1 No .....2	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Did your original parents search for you?	Yes ..... 1 No ..... 2 Don't know ..... 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
What information did you have to commence your search with ?	Adoption Order ..... 1 Name supplied by adoptive parents ..... 2 Non-identifying information .... 3 None ..... 4 Other ..... 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 13
Who influenced your decision to search ?	No-one, own decision ..... 1 Family, which member(s) .... 2 ..... Friends/acquaintances ..... 3 Media/publicity ..... 4 Adoption reform group ..... 5 Other ..... 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 19
What factors influenced your search ?	Need to know identity ..... 1 Wanted to meet mother ..... 2 Wanted to meet father ..... 3 Wanted to meet siblings ..... 4 Others thought you should search ..... 5 Publicity given to searching ... 6 Curiosity ..... 7 Other(.....) ..... 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 <input type="checkbox"/> 27
What impact did search have on marriage, children, work,etc.	..... .....	
At what point in search did you tell others of search ?	Always open about it ..... 1 After attending search/support group for .....months .... 2 After finding the name ..... 3 Haven't told anyone ..... 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 28 <input type="checkbox"/> 29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31
How did you feel when you got identifying information ?	Overjoyed ..... 1 Nervous ..... 2 Afraid ..... 3 Content/peaceful ..... 4 Other (.....) ..... 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 32 <input type="checkbox"/> 33 <input type="checkbox"/> 34 <input type="checkbox"/> 35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36
What prompted your search ?	Family crisis ..... 1 Medical problem ..... 2 Birth of a child ..... 3 Reached 18 ..... 4 Death of a parent ..... 5 Legal difficulties ..... 6 Applying for passport/Birth certificate ..... 7 Other (.....) ..... 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 37 <input type="checkbox"/> 38 <input type="checkbox"/> 39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41 <input type="checkbox"/> 42 <input type="checkbox"/> 43 <input type="checkbox"/> 44

OFFICE USE ONLY

How did you search ?

- Employed a Detective Agency ..... 1
- Joined a Search/Support group ..... 2
- Did it myself ..... 3

<input type="checkbox"/>	45
<input type="checkbox"/>	46
<input type="checkbox"/>	47

Which of the following steps did you take ?

- Adoption Agency ..... 1
- Hospital ..... 2
- Lawyer ..... 3
- Registrar General ..... 4
- Department for Community Welfare or equivalent ..... 5
- Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc. or equivalent ..... 6
- Advertised in newspapers ..... 7
- Searched newspapers ..... 8
- Asked adoptive parents/friends/relatives etc. .... 9

<input type="checkbox"/>	48
<input type="checkbox"/>	49
<input type="checkbox"/>	50
<input type="checkbox"/>	51
<input type="checkbox"/>	52
<input type="checkbox"/>	53
<input type="checkbox"/>	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	55
<input type="checkbox"/>	56

THE CONTACT

How many kilometres from you did your parent(s) live ?

- Less than 20 ..... 1
- 21 - 50 ..... 2
- 51 - 100 ..... 3
- 101 - 1000 ..... 4
- 1001 - 3000 ..... 5
- Overseas ..... 6

<input type="checkbox"/>	57
--------------------------	----

How much time elapsed between locating and contact ?

- 1 day ..... 1
- 1 - 7 days ..... 2
- 1 - 2 weeks ..... 3
- 2 - 4 weeks ..... 4
- Longer ..... 5

<input type="checkbox"/>	58
--------------------------	----

If you waited, why did you wait ?

.....

Did you receive any pre-contact counselling from :

- Adoption support group ..... 1
- Professional adoption counselling service ..... 2
- Psychologist/Doctor ..... 3
- Adoption Agency ..... 4
- Other ..... 5

<input type="checkbox"/>	59
<input type="checkbox"/>	60
<input type="checkbox"/>	61
<input type="checkbox"/>	62
<input type="checkbox"/>	63

Whom did you contact ?

- Mother ..... 1
- Father ..... 2
- Siblings ..... 3
- Other Relatives ..... 4
- Family/friend ..... 5
- Other ..... 6

<input type="checkbox"/>	64
<input type="checkbox"/>	65
<input type="checkbox"/>	66
<input type="checkbox"/>	67
<input type="checkbox"/>	68
<input type="checkbox"/>	69

How old were you at the time?

- Under 18 ..... 1
- 18 - 30 ..... 2
- 31 - 40 ..... 3
- 41 - 50 ..... 4
- 51 - 60 ..... 5
- 60 + ..... 6

<input type="checkbox"/>	70
--------------------------	----

OFFICE USE  
ONLY

How old was the person you contacted?.....  
.....

71	72

Who made the initial contact ?

Self .....	1
Spouse .....	2
Relative/friend .....	3
Adoption support group	
mediator .....	4
Adoption Agency .....	5
Other .....	6

	73
--	----

How was contact made ?

In person .....	1
Telephone .....	2
Mail .....	3

	74
--	----

end of card

How was contact received by the person contacted ?

With love/warmth .....	1
With interest .....	2
Welcoming .....	3
Unsure .....	4
Reserved .....	5
Fearful .....	6
Indifferent .....	7
Hostile .....	8
Other .....	9

	6
	7
	8
	9
	10
	11
	12
	13
	14

Were you satisfied with the approach of the mediator?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2

	15
--	----

If no, give reasons  
.....  
.....

Do you think a mediator should be involved in all reunions ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

	16
--	----

Who do you consider would be the best mediator ?

Professional social worker/psychologist etc. ....	1
Someone who is themselves adopted .....	2
Someone who has had a reunion themselves .....	3
A non-professional third party with no personal involvement in the area .....	4
Combination of above .....	5

	17
--	----

If (5) , state combination  
.....

What do you consider are the most important things a mediator should do ?

(1) before the reunion,  
please comment  
.....  
.....

(2) during the reunion,  
please comment  
.....  
.....



How many times did you see the mediator before the reunion ?

Not at all .....	1
1 - 2 times .....	2
3 - 4 times .....	3
5 - 6 times .....	4
More than 6 times .....	5

18

Would you have liked to have seen the mediator more than you did ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

19

If yes, for what reason ?  
Please specify.

.....  
.....

Would you like to have seen the mediator less than you did ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

20

If yes, for what reason ?  
Please specify

.....  
.....

THE REUNION

Who was involved in planning the reunion

.....

Where was it held ?

Mediator's home .....	1
My home .....	2
Their home .....	3
Public place .....	4
Other (.....) .....	5

21

List people present at reunion.  
(not names)

.....  
.....

Did you spend time alone with the person contacted ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2

22

Was the reunion what you had hoped for ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

23

If not, how did reality differ ?

.....  
.....

Did you want further contact ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

24

Did others indicate they wanted further contact ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2

25

How was this expressed ?

.....  
.....

THE RELATIONSHIP

How much time elapsed between  
reunion and your next contact ?

Less than 2 weeks ..... 1  
2 - 4 weeks ..... 2  
1 - 3 months ..... 3  
3 - 6 months ..... 4  
More than 6 months ..... 5

☐ 26

How much contact was there  
in the first year ?

Less than 3 occasions ..... 1  
3 - 6 occasions ..... 2  
7 - 10 occasions ..... 3  
More than 10 occasions ..... 4

☐ 27

Have most of the contacts been by :

Phone ..... 1  
Letters ..... 2  
Visits ..... 3

☐ 28

How long has it been since  
reunion ?

Less than 1 year ..... 1  
1 - 2 years ..... 2  
2 - 5 years ..... 3  
More than 5 years ..... 4

☐ 29

Has contact

Increased ..... 1  
Decreased ..... 2  
Currently non-existent ..... 3  
Remained the same ..... 4

☐ 30

Described your present  
relationship

.....  
.....  
.....

Are you happy with the  
relationship now ?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Unsure ..... 3

☐ 31

What were, in fact, your natural  
mother's reasons for placing  
you for adoption :

Her physical health ..... 1  
Her emotional health ..... 2  
She was too young ..... 3  
She was too old ..... 4  
She lacked finance ..... 5  
She was single ..... 6  
Family pressure ..... 7  
Social pressure ..... 8  
The wishes of your natural father ... 9  
To provide for your security .....10  
I have no idea .....11  
Other (.....).....12

☐ 32  
☐ 33  
☐ 34  
☐ 35  
☐ 36  
☐ 37  
☐ 38  
☐ 39  
☐ 40  
☐ 41  
☐ 42  
☐ 43

THE EFFECTS OF OPENING THE ADOPTION

What changes have occurred with regard to the following :  
(please circle only 1 number per line)

- (1) Self-esteem
- (2) Self-confidence
- (3) Marriage
- (4) Contentment with self
- (5) Sense of guilt

Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

What changes have occurred with regard to your relationship with the following?

- (1) Adoptive Mother
- (2) Adoptive Father
- (3) Adoptive siblings
- (4) Other relatives
- (5) Your partner
- (6) Your children
- (7) Others (.....)

What do you think is the quality of your relationship with the following?

- (1) Natural Mother
- (2) Natural Father
- (3) Natural Mother's children
- (4) Natural Father's children

Describe how you have handled conflict with any of the people listed in (73) and (74)

Do you feel others in the new family are like extended family?

.....  
.....  
.....  
  
Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Unsure ..... 3

Which common relationship do you feel is similar to your relationship with your natural mother ?

- Mother ..... 1
- Sister ..... 2
- Good friend ..... 3
- Other (.....)..... 4

62

Which common relationship do you feel is similar to your relationship with your natural father ?

- Father ..... 1
- Brother ..... 2
- Good friend ..... 3
- Other (.....)..... 4

63

To what extent has your reunion affected your attitudes to the following statements :

(please circle 1 number per line)

- (1) I feel differently from other people because I am adopted.
- (2) Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.
- (3) I feel cut off from my ancestry.
- (4) I don't feel I really belong.
- (5) It is easy for me to feel close with people.
- (6) It is easy for me to trust people.
- (7) I wonder who I look like.
- (8) My biological parents are of little concern to me.
- (9) I feel comfortable about being the child of both my adoptive and biological parents.
- (10) I wonder about how I was born.
- (11) Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.
- (12) Not knowing my genetic inheritance causes me uncertainty regarding my susceptibility to medical complaints and illnesses.
- (13) I wonder if my natural mother thinks about things the way I do.
- (14) I wonder if my natural mother has the same interests as me.

Much less true for me now	Less true for me now	Unaffected by reunion	More true for me now	Much more true for me now
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

	Much less true for me now	Less true for me now	Unaffected by reunion	More true for me now	Much more true for me now	
(15) I wonder who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
(16) I want to know whether I have any relatives	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
(17) I feel I have no roots.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
(18) I feel I have a ghost in the background that influences what I do.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
(19) I have a sense of incompleteness.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
(20) I feel like a second class person.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
(21) I worry that people will know I'm different.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
(22) Because I don't know where I fit in my family tree, I don't have a sense of continuity	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
(23) I would like to meet another person who shares my biology.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
(24) Honesty is especially important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
(25) I always like to know where I stand.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 16

IN RETROSPECT

0. Now that you have had a reunion, do you think that :

(a) adoptees should have access to identifying information, only after they have reached 18 years of age

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

(b) adoptees should have access to identifying information prior to 18, if their parents agree

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

(c) adoptees should have access to identifying information at any age

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

1. If you could do it all again what would you change ?

.....

.....

2. If you could go back in time would you still :

1. search ?

Yes .....	1
No .....	2
Unsure .....	3

2. contact ?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Unsure ..... 3

☐ 21

3. reunite ?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Unsure ..... 3

☐ 22

How much effort are you  
prepared to put in to  
changing the laws now ?

A great deal ..... 1  
Some..... 2  
None at all ..... 3

☐ 23

Do you feel that the best way to  
change laws is by :  
(use more than one category  
if you wish)

Public meetings and/or  
demonstrations ..... 1  
Letters/approaches to  
politicians ..... 2  
Quietly press for change ..... 3  
Letting others make the  
changes ..... 4  
Other (.....)..... 5

☐ 24

☐ 25

☐ 26

☐ 27

☐ 28

Would you be prepared to assist  
other adoptees by :  
(use more than one category  
if you wish)

Attempting to change ..... 1  
existing laws  
Helping with search ..... 2  
Accepting a committee  
position in your  
adoption support group ..... 3  
Offering emotional support only.. 4

☐ 29

☐ 30

☐ 31

☐ 32

Do you think you would have had  
a reunion without the help of  
a search/support group ?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Unsure ..... 3

☐ 33

What did you find the most  
helpful function of your  
search/support group ?

Emotional support ..... 1  
Contact with fellow adoptees..... 2  
Newsletters ..... 3  
Knowing someone understood..... 4  
Assistance with search ..... 5  
Assistance with mediation ..... 6  
Other (.....)..... 7  
Not helpful ..... 8

☐ 34

☐ 35

☐ 36

☐ 37

☐ 38

☐ 39

☐ 40

☐ 41

If your natural mother did not  
want contact,did you think it  
was because of :

Inappropriate mediation ..... 1  
No feelings for me ..... 2  
Threatened privacy ..... 3  
Anxious about ability to cope ... 4  
Other (.....)..... 5

☐ 42

☐ 43

☐ 44

☐ 45

☐ 46

If you have not renewed membership of your search/support group, is it because :

- Your search is ended ..... 1  
You don't see the need ..... 2  
You haven't received any help from them ..... 3  
You can't afford to ..... 4  
Other (.....)..... 5

☐ 47  
☐ 48  
☐ 49  
☐ 50  
☐ 51

If you were a member of Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc., or its equivalent, did you believe, before joining, that it was :

- A detective Agency ..... 1  
A business enterprise ..... 2  
A government funded agency ..... 3  
A voluntary self-help group ..... 4  
Other (.....)..... 5

☐ 52

What type of support do you think other adult adoptees need most ?

- Emotional support from peers ..... 1  
Help with search ..... 2  
Supportive adoptive friend..... 3  
Counselling from professional counsellors ..... 4

☐ 53

If you have had a reunion, do you think that it is important to :

- Tell Dept. for Community Welfare, or its equivalent ..... 1  
Tell your friends ..... 2  
Tell your adoptive parents ..... 3  
Tell the media ..... 4  
Tell politicians ..... 5  
Keep it to yourself ..... 6

☐ 54  
☐ 55  
☐ 56  
☐ 57  
☐ 58  
☐ 59

How do you feel now about your reunion ?

- Extremely dissatisfied ..... 1  
Dissatisfied ..... 2  
Neutral ..... 3  
Satisfied ..... 4  
Extremely satisfied ..... 5

☐ 60

Do you consider your reunion has been :

- Extremely unsuccessful ..... 1  
Unsuccessful ..... 2  
Neutral ..... 3  
Successful ..... 4  
Extremely successful ..... 5

☐ 61

Once again, thank you for your participation.

## APPENDIX 3

Joint Covering Letter for Study 1B

from

Adoption Research and Counselling Service

and

Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc.





ADOPTION JIGSAW W.A. INC.

P.O. BOX 252,  
HILLARYS, 6025.

Department of Psychology  
Nedlands, Western Australia 6009  
Telegrams Uniwest Perth, Telex AA92992  
Telephone (09) 380 2644

Code \_\_\_\_\_

Contact between adoptees and biological parents is a central issue in contemporary adoption policy debates. Much more needs to be known about the search process and about the outcome of reunions. This information is required to assist all those associated with adoption : legislators, policy makers, adoption workers and self-help groups (and other members of the adoption family.)

This present project is part of a larger study examining the process by which relinquishing mothers and adopted persons search for each other and the outcomes of their contacts with each other.

The attached questionnaire is addressed only to adoptees who have been reunited with their biological parent(s). It has been designed to be as comprehensive as possible in order to cover the very different situations and views of adoptees. The result is a long questionnaire but one which we hope you will find is sensitive to your particular situation. The questionnaire was developed jointly by Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc. and The Adoption Research and Counselling Service.

In places, you may find it sets off feelings and raises questions that are difficult to answer. In our desire to be comprehensive, we do not wish to suggest that all the experiences we touch upon are experiences you should have had yourself.

The information which you provide will be dealt with in a strictly confidential manner, and will only be identified by a code number, never by name. We are interested in the general pattern of responses, and the results will be reported in a general form.

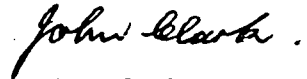
If you feel that the questionnaire did not provide enough opportunities for you to record your story, additional information is welcomed - please feel free to provide as much descriptive information as you think is necessary.

At the end of the study, we will send you a brief report of our results and will tell you how a more detailed report can be obtained.

Thank you for participating in this project. Your help will, we are sure, go toward improving the situation for adopted persons in Australia.



Assoc. Prof. Robin Winkler  
Director  
Adoption Research and  
Counselling Service



John Clark  
President  
Adoption Jigsaw W.A. Inc.

## APPENDIX 4

Breakdown of the 52 self description items into 5 categories.

## BIOLOGICAL IDENTITY ITEMS:

Item +/-	Item Wording	Inc Stage 1
1	+ Honesty is especially important to me.	Yes
3	+ I wonder who I really am.	Yes
	- I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	No
8	+ I feel I have no roots.	Yes
10	+ I always like to know where I stand.	Yes
12	+ Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	No
13	- I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	Yes
15	- I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	No
18	- My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	Yes
19	- I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	Yes
20	- I feel clear about my potential.	No
26	+ I tend to cling to people.	No
29	- Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	Yes
32	- I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity, and what by environment.	No
38	- I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	No
39	+ Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	Yes
43	+ I wonder who I look like.	Yes
45	+ I find it hard to break relationships.	No
46	- I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	Yes
48	+ I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	No
52	+ I expect a lot of people.	No

ALIENATION ITEMS:

---

Itm No. +/-	Item Wording	Inc. St. 1
4	- It is easy for me to trust people.	Yes
6	+ I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	Yes
7	- I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	No
11	+ I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	No
12	+ Separations are particularly upsetting to me.	No
21	+ Making new friends is especially hard for me.	No
22	- I don't care what other people think of me.	No
23	+ I feel like a second class person.	Yes
26	+ I tend to cling to people.	No
27	- It is easy for me to feel close to people.	Yes
30	+ Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	No
34	+ I feel I really don't belong.	Yes
35	+ I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	No
36	- I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	No
42	- I mix easily with people.	No
45	+ I find it hard to break relationships.	No
48	+ I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	No
50	- I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	No

GENEALOGICAL CONCERN ITEMS:

---

Itm No.+/-	Item Wording	Inc.St1
14	+ I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	Yes
24	- The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	No
28	- I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	Yes
29	+ Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	Yes
31	- Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	No
34	+ I feel I really don't belong.	Yes
37	+ I feel cut off from my ancestry.	Yes
39	+ Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	Yes
47	- Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	Yes
49	+ Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	No

CURIOSITY ITEMS:

---

ItmNo.	+/-	Item Wording	IncSt1
6	+	I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	Yes
13	-	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	Yes
14	+	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	Yes
17	+	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	Yes
32	-	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	No
38	-	I am what I am, my biological background is of little significance.	No
43	+	I wonder who I look like.	Yes
44	+	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	Yes
47	-	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	Yes
51	+	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	Yes

Integration Items:

---

ItmNo.	+/-	Item Wording	IncSt1
2	+	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	No
5	+	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	No
9	+	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	No
16	+	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	No
20	-	I feel clear about my potential.	No
25	+	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	No
32	-	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by hereditary and what by environment.	No
33	-	I feel I am in full control of my life.	No
40	-	I usually feel at peace with myself.	No
41	+	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	No



## APPENDIX 5

### Media Release

For immediate release/please announce

## **ADOPTEEES NEEDED URGENTLY FOR IMPORTANT UWA RESEARCH**

Some 300 or more adopted people who have not tried to find out who their birth parents are are needed urgently to take part in an important confidential research project at the University of Western Australia.

Mrs Sue Midford of Doubleview needs them to continue her research on the topic 'The meaning of identity to adoptees' for her Master's degree in psychology.

The study, the first of its kind in Australia, is part of the ongoing research programme of the UWA Psychology Department's Adoption Research and Counselling Service, which is being utilised by both government and welfare groups.

As a result of appeals for help with her research, Mrs Midford has heard from several hundred adoptees who have found or are seeking their birth parents, and who have been happy to answer the questionnaires she has sent out.

However, as it is known that some 95 per cent of adoptees do not try to find their birth parents, she needs an equal number of those in her survey or the results will be so unbalanced she will have to abandon it altogether.

Says Mrs Midford: 'Our initial research has already shown that some adoptees may lack a strong sense of identity, of "who they are", and also of belonging—either to a family group or associated groups.

'People who are raised by birth parents gain information about themselves, their parents and relations, the extended family, the history, exploits and traditions of the family, and so on. In addition to their own life history, this forms part of their sense of identity.

'For adoptees, these links are broken and, no matter how much they are loved by their adopted family, some still do not feel totally part of it.

'In some, this sense of not belonging can lead to a feeling of alienation which can extend to community relationships.

'We need to gain a better understanding of identity and its function for adoptees and the extent of the effects.

'This is particularly important for welfare groups working with adopted people and for those involved in considering legislation in the area.

'At present in WA, for example, adopted people cannot find out through the authorities who their birth parents are.

'Yet our research with adoptees who found their parents through other sources shows that 99 per cent were pleased to have the mystery of their backgrounds solved and felt closer to their adopted parents. Only one per cent regretted finding out.'

Any adoptees who are not seeking their parents and would like to help Mrs Midford with her research can ring (09) 380 2644, the UWA Adoption Research and Counselling Service, for a questionnaire to be sent to them. All information will be completely confidential.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Mrs Midford can be contacted on (09) 380 2644 at the University of Western Australia and on (09) 446 8483 at home.

2 October 1985.

## APPENDIX 6

Newspapers and Radio Stationswhich publicized the Adoptee Research:

**Newspapers:**

The West Australian, W.A.  
The Age, Victoria.  
Sunday Times, W.A.  
Pelican, Uninews, W.A.  
West Advertiser, W.A.  
Post Group of Community Newspapers, W.A.  
Wanneroo Times, W.A.  
Country Womens Magazine, W.A.  
The Record, Catholic newspapers, W.A.

**Radio Stations:**

6PR, W.A. - interview  
6WN, W.A. - interviews and news items  
6UVSFM, W.A. - interview  
6WF, W.A. - interview and talkback.

APPENDIX 7

Study II/III Questionnaire



# *The University of Western Australia*

ADOPTION RESEARCH AND COUNSELLING SERVICE

CODE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Department of Psychology  
Nedlands, Western Australia 6009  
Telegrams Uniwest Perth, Telex AA92992  
Telephone (09) 380 2644

Clinical Unit

Dear

Thank you for contacting us. We appreciate your interest in our research. You will find enclosed a questionnaire that asks you about various aspects of your experiences as an adopted person.

Adoption experiences vary widely for different adopted people. The questionnaire is a long one. This is in order to make it as comprehensive as possible and thus cover the very different life situations and views of adoptees. While it is long, we hope that you will find it is sensitive to your particular situation. In places you may find it sets off feelings and raises questions that are difficult to answer. We do not wish to suggest that all the experiences we touch upon are experiences you should have had yourself.

The questionnaire is part of a larger study examining the meaning of identity to all adoptees and, where applicable, the effects of contact with birth parents on this sense of identity.

The questionnaire covers central issues in contemporary adoption policy debates. More needs to be known about these and similar issues in order to assist all those associated with adoption: legislators, policy makers, adoption workers, self-help groups and other members of the extended adoption family.

Please answer all the questions in the questionnaire except where you are directed to proceed to another section. We are interested in the general pattern of responses. The results will be reported in a general form.

If you feel the questionnaire did not offer enough opportunities for you to record your story, we would welcome any additional information. So please feel free to provide as much descriptive information as you think is necessary.

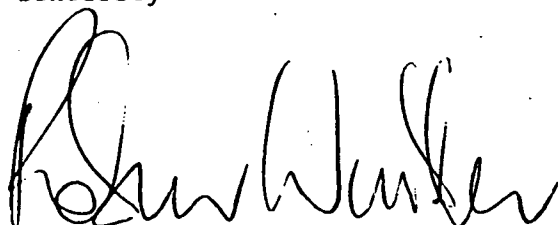
Please use the enclosed reply paid envelope to return the questionnaire to us.

Thank you for your participation in this project. Your help will, we

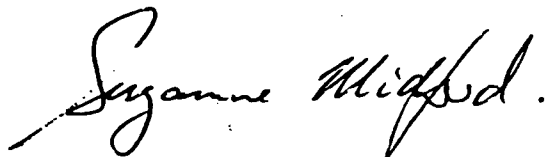
- 2 -

are sure, help improve the situation for adopted persons in Australia.

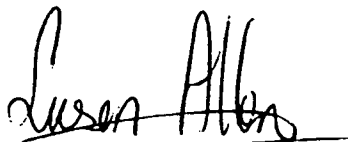
Yours sincerely



Assoc. Professor Robin Winkler  
Director,  
Adoption Research and Counselling  
Service



Suzanne Midford  
Counsellor,  
Adoption Research and  
Counselling Service



Susan Allen  
Postgraduate Student



STRICTLY CONFIDENTIALADOPTEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the number or numbers that best correspond with your answer to each question. There are also some questions which require you to write your answer.

A. CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

1. Your age.....years
2. Your sex                      Male.....1  
                                    Female.....2
3. Place of your birth.....
4. Please indicate the cultural/ethnic background of each of your parents -  
    adoptive and birth, please specify: Australian, European, Aboriginal,  
    Asian, unknown, etc.  
    Adoptive Mother.....  
    Adoptive Father.....  
    Birth Mother.....  
    Birth Father.....
5. Your present marital status:    Single.....1  
   Married.....2  
   Separated.....3  
   Divorced.....4  
   Widowed.....5  
   De facto.....6
6. Please categorize the nature of your work:    Home Duties.....1  
   Unskilled.....2  
   Semi Skilled.....3  
   Clerical/Sales.....4  
   Managerial/Professional.....5  
   Student.....6  
   Unemployed.....7  
   Other (please specify).....8  
   .....
7. Postcode of the suburb/town/district in which you live.....
8. Are you a member of an adoption support/search group?  
    No.....1  
    Yes.....2    which one(s).....
9. How many children were there in your adoptive family, including yourself?.....
10. Which child were you?    First.....1  
                                    Second.....2  
                                    Third.....3  
                                    Fourth or more.....4
11. Do you have any children of your own?    No.....1  
   Yes.....2    How many?.....
12. If you have any children, are they (indicate one or more):  
    your biological child(ren).....1  
    your adopted child(ren).....2  
    the child(ren) of your partner (viz step).....3

B. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ADOPTION

1. How old were you when you found out you were adopted? If uncertain please  
    estimate age.....years
2. Who informed you of your adoptive status?    Adoptive mother.....1  
   Adoptive father.....2  
   Both adoptive parents.....3  
   Adoptive siblings.....4  
   Other relatives.....5  
   Friends/acquaintances.....6  
   Overheard it.....7  
   Government official.....8  
   Other (please specify).....9  
   .....

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9. Discussion of your adoptee status with your adoptive parents. Please answer A, B, C, and D by circling the appropriate answer for each:

A. Did you feel that your adoptive parents were prepared to discuss your adoption with you?

- No.....1
- Yes...all aspects.....2
- some aspects.....3
- very little.....4

B. How often did you discuss your adoption with your adoptive parents?

- Never.....1
- Rarely.....2
- Occasionally.....3
- Often.....4
- Too often.....5

C. Your interest in discussion about your adoption:

- Totally disinterested.....1
- Disinterested.....2
- Neutral.....3
- Interested.....4
- Very interested.....5
- Not applicable.....6

D. Your adoptive parents attitude to discussion about your adoption:

- Very happy to discuss it.....1
- Happy to discuss it.....2
- Neutral.....3
- Reluctant to discuss it.....4
- Refused/would not discuss it.....5
- Not applicable.....6

10. If you were able to discuss aspects of your adoption with your adoptive parents, could you please indicate below which of those aspects were most important to you:

11. What do you think were your birth mother's reasons for placing you for adoption? (If you have made contact with your birth mother and/or other biological relative(s) please answer the question in terms of your beliefs about your placement before you met/spoke/heard from her.) Circle one or more of the following:

- Her physical health .....1
- Her emotional health.....2
- She was too young.....3
- She was too old.....4
- She lacked finance.....5
- She was single.....6
- Family pressure.....7
- Social pressure.....8
- The wishes of your birth father.....9
- To provide for your security.....10
- I have no idea.....11
- Other (please specify).....12

SELF DESCRIPTIONS

Below are some statements with which some people agree and others disagree. There are no right or wrong answers. Whatever you happen to feel about a statement is the right answer for you. Read each statement carefully and circle the number which best describes your feeling about the statement. Please answer every question.

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
1. Honesty is especially important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I wonder who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is easy for me to trust people.	1	2	3	4	5
5. As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	1	2	3	4	5

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	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
6. I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel I have no roots.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I always like to know where I stand.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel clear about my potential.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Making new friends is especially hard for me.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't care what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel like a second class person.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I tend to cling to people.	1	2	3	4	5
27. It is easy for me to feel close to people.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	1	2	3	4	5

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	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
31. Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I feel I am in full control of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I feel I really don't belong.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I feel cut off from my ancestry.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I usually feel at peace with myself.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I mix easily with people.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I wonder who I look like.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I find it hard to break relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
51. Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I expect a lot of people.	1	2	3	4	5

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RELATIONSHIP WITH ADOPTIVE PARENTS

In this section various attitudes and behaviours of parents are listed. Please rate the statements as you remember each of your adoptive parents in your first 16 years. Complete both sections, one for your adoptive mother and one for your adoptive father. Circle the number which is most appropriate for each statement: very like = 1, moderately like = 2, moderately unlike = 3, very unlike = 4.

<u>Adoptive Mother:</u>	Rate the statements as you remember your mother in your first 16 years.	1 Very like	2 Mod. like	3 Mod. unlike	4 Very unlike
1.	Spoke to me with a warm and friendly voice.	1	2	3	4
2.	Did not help me as much as I needed.	1	2	3	4
3.	Let me do those things I liked doing.	1	2	3	4
4.	Seemed emotionally cold to me.	1	2	3	4
5.	Appeared to understand my problems and worries.	1	2	3	4
6.	Was affectionate to me.	1	2	3	4
7.	Liked me to make my own decisions.	1	2	3	4
8.	Did not want me to grow up.	1	2	3	4
9.	Tried to control everything I did.	1	2	3	4
10.	Invaded my privacy.	1	2	3	4
11.	Enjoyed talking things over with me.	1	2	3	4
12.	Frequently smiled at me.	1	2	3	4
13.	Tended to baby me.	1	2	3	4
14.	Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted.	1	2	3	4
15.	Let me decide things for myself.	1	2	3	4
16.	Made me feel I wasn't wanted.	1	2	3	4
17.	Could make me feel better when I was upset.	1	2	3	4
18.	Did not talk with me very much.	1	2	3	4
19.	Tried to make me dependent on her.	1	2	3	4
20.	Felt I could not look after myself unless she was around.	1	2	3	4
21.	Gave me as much freedom as I wanted.	1	2	3	4
22.	Let me go out as often as I wanted.	1	2	3	4
23.	Was overprotective of me.	1	2	3	4
24.	Did not praise me.	1	2	3	4
25.	Let me dress in any way I pleased.	1	2	3	4

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Adoptive Father: Rate the statements as you remember  
your father in your first 16 years:

	1 Very like	2 Mod. like	3 Mod. unlike	4 Very unlike
1. Spoke to me with a warm and friendly voice.	1	2	3	4
2. Did not help me as much as I needed.	1	2	3	4
3. Let me do those things I liked doing.	1	2	3	4
4. Seemed emotionally cold to me.	1	2	3	4
5. Appeared to understand my problems and worries.	1	2	3	4
6. Was affectionate to me.	1	2	3	4
7. Liked me to make my own decisions.	1	2	3	4
8. Did not want me to grow up.	1	2	3	4
9. Tried to control everything I did.	1	2	3	4
10. Invaded my privacy.	1	2	3	4
11. Enjoyed talking things over with me.	1	2	3	4
12. Frequently smiled at me.	1	2	3	4
13. Tended to baby me.	1	2	3	4
14. Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted.	1	2	3	4
15. Let me decide things for myself.	1	2	3	4
16. Made me feel I wasn't wanted.	1	2	3	4
17. Could make me feel better when I was upset.	1	2	3	4
18. Did not talk with me very much	1	2	3	4
19. Tried to make me dependent on him.	1	2	3	4
20. Felt I could not look after myself unless he was around.	1	2	3	4
21. Gave me as much freedom as I wanted.	1	2	3	4
22. Let me go out as often as I wanted.	1	2	3	4
23. Was overprotective of me.	1	2	3	4
24. Did not praise me.	1	2	3	4
25. Let me dress in any way I pleased.	1	2	3	4

Any comments on your relationship with your adoptive parents: \_\_\_\_\_

End of Record 3

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ATTITUDE TO YOURSELF

For each of the following statements, please indicate for you, whether it is almost always true, often true, sometimes true, seldom true, or never true by circling the number under the appropriate heading:

	1 Almost always true	2 Often true	3 Some- times true	4 Seldom true	5 Never true
1. On the whole I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4	5
2. At times I think that I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
9. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I take a positive attitude to myself.	1	2	3	4	5

YOUR BIRTH FAMILY

You are asked to answer each of the following three questions, by circling the number which represents the statement which best describes your level of information and contact - if any - with your birth family.

1. Non Identifying Information (eg. mothers occupation, age at your birth, religion, physical characteristics)
  - a. I am not interested in obtaining non identifying information.....1
  - b. I have made no effort to obtain non identifying information.....2
  - c. I am trying, so far unsuccessfully, to obtain non identifying information...3
  - d. I have tried to obtain non identifying information, but have given up.....4
  - e. I have obtained non identifying information.....5
2. Identifying Information (eg. name, address)
  - a. I am not interested in obtaining identifying information.....1
  - b. I have made no effort to obtain identifying information.....2
  - c. I am trying, so far unsuccessfully, to obtain identifying information.....3
  - d. I have tried to obtain identifying information, but have given up.....4
  - e. I have obtained identifying information.....5
3. Personal Contact (eg. reunion in person, or telephone, or letter)
  - a. I am not interested in personal contact.....1
  - b. I have made no effort to make personal contact.....2
  - c. I have registered my desire for personal contact.....3
  - d. I am actively seeking personal contact.....4
  - e. I have made contact with my birth parent(s)/other relative(s).....5
  - f. I am not yet sure I want to meet my birth parent(s).....6

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DECISION TO SEARCH OR NOT

You are asked to answer the following true/false items whatever your attitude to searching. Thus please circle T (true) or F (false) for each of the following statements. For some questions neither true nor false may be a perfect reply, in such cases select the one which is closest to how you feel.

	True	False
1. I would be available if my birth parent(s) ever wanted to find me.	T	F
2. I do not wish to interfere in my birth parents' current life.	T	F
3. I would like to know whether my birth parent(s) is/are alive or dead.	T	F
4. My adoptive parents would not approve of my intruding into the lives of my birth parent(s).	T	F
5. I would like to know if I have any full or half brothers/sisters.	T	F
6. It is better for me to ignore my biological beginnings and get on with my life.	T	F
7. I am the child of my adoptive parents, and my birth parents are irrelevant.	T	F
8. I would like to meet someone who shares my biology.	T	F
9. My life is happy and stable now, I don't want to disrupt it.	T	F
10. My birth parent(s) would probably resent me if I made contact.	T	F
11. I have a genetically linked illness and need my birth parent(s) to provide a medical history for me.	T	F
12. My adoptive parents would be deeply hurt and distressed if I searched.	T	F
13. I would like my birth parent(s) to know about me.	T	F
14. I want to know the circumstances of my birth.	T	F
15. I don't know where to begin to search.	T	F
16. I wonder if my birth parent(s) are interested in my life.	T	F
17. My adoptive parents would like to meet my birth parents.	T	F
18. I would like to meet someone whom I look like.	T	F
19. I would like to put the pieces of my life together.	T	F
20. I will not rest until I have knowledge of my biological beginnings.	T	F
21. My children want/would want to meet all their grandparents.	T	F
22. I believe in looking forward and not backwards.	T	F
23. I wouldn't consider searching for someone who deserted me.	T	F
24. My birth parents have no right to meet me.	T	F
25. If my birth parents want to meet me it is up to them to search for me.	T	F
26. I would like my birth parents to know I'm alive.	T	F
27. I would not consider searching unless the laws permitted it.	T	F
28. My birth parents chose to give me up, now I choose to ignore them.	T	F

Do you have any comments on your decision to search or not to search? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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DISCUSSION WITH ADOPTIVE PARENTS REGARDING CONTACT/REUNION WITH BIRTH PARENTS

1. If you have not discussed the possibility of contact of any kind with your adoptive parents, please tick the box and go on to Section I.

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2. If you have discussed the possibility of contact (of any kind) with your adoptive parents, please describe their reaction to the idea. You may indicate more than one reaction for each of your parents:

	Adoptive mother	Adoptive father
understanding		
hurt		
obstructive		
helpful		
fearful		
cooperative		
other (please specify).....		
.....		

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3. When did you first discuss with your adoptive parents the possibility of reunion:

Your age at the time.....years.

   
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4. Did your adoptive parents put any view to you regarding the possibility of your searching for your birth family? Circle one or more of the following:

- a) never discussed it.....1
- b) encouraged you to search as much and as little as you wanted.....2
- c) provided you with all the information they had about your birth parent(s).3
- d) told you not to search.....4
- e) made subtle comments suggesting you should not search.....5
- f) volunteered to help you search.....6
- g) were always available with support and love.....7
- h) made you feel ungrateful/unloving if you wanted to search.....8
- i) suggested you would disrupt your birth parent(s) life if you searched.....9
- j) other (please specify).....

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5. Do you believe the wishes of your adoptive parents, whether or not to search, should come first?

Yes.....1  
No.....2

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End of Record 4

THE SEARCH

1. If you have never considered searching for members of your birth family tick the following box, and proceed to Section K.

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2. How old were you when you first started searching? \_\_\_\_\_ years

3. a) Please indicate which of the following most closely describes your search to date:

- i. I have searched continuously since I first began.....1
- ii. I have searched in phases; there have been times when I have searched actively, and then left it for a while and searched again....2
- iii. Other (please specify).....

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b) If you have searched in phases, are you currently in an active phase?

Yes.....1  
No.....2

4. How much did you know about your birth parent(s) before you began searching?

- a) nothing.....1
- b) non-identifying information only (eg. birth parents nationality; age at your birth; occupation; life circumstances at your birth).....2
- c) birth parent(s) name(s) only.....3
- d) birth parent(s) name(s) plus some non-identifying information.....4
- e) birth parent(s) name(s) plus other identifying information (eg. address, telephone number).....5

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5. What steps have you taken to find information about your birth parent(s) since you began to search? Indicate one or more of the following:

- Adoption Agency.....1
- Hospital.....2
- Lawyer.....3
- Registrar General.....4
- State Government Adoption Department.....5
- Adoption support/search group (eg. Jigsaw, Triangle)....6
- Advertised in newspapers.....7
- Searched newspapers.....8
- Private detective.....9
- Electoral Rolls.....10
- Telephone book.....11
- Asked adoptive parents/friends/relatives.....12
- Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

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6. Who do you most want to contact? Circle one of the following:

- birth mother.....1
- birth father.....2
- birth brother(s)/sister(s).....3
- birth grandparent(s)/other relatives.....4
- anyone I can find.....5

7. For each of the following members of your biological family please indicate the current level of your information and/or contact. Tick the appropriate boxes:

	No Inform.	Only Non Identif. Inform.	Identif. Inform.	Had a Reunion	I know person deceased
birth mother					
birth father					
birth brother(s)/sister(s)					
birth grandparent(s)					
other biological relative(s)					

J. EXPECTATIONS OF CONTACT/REUNION

This question should ONLY be answered if you are searching for your birth relatives. Do not answer if you:

a) have never searched; or

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b) have had a reunion

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Go on to Section K.

Proceed if you are searching.

For each of the following questions circle the number that corresponds to your answer:

1. Do you expect the reunion will be painful?

- definitely yes.....1
- probably yes.....2
- probably no.....3
- definitely no.....4

2. Are you fully prepared for the reunion experience?

- definitely yes.....1
- probably yes.....2
- probably no.....3
- definitely no.....4

3. How important is it to you that you are fully prepared for the reunion?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important	not really important	neutral importance	somewhat important	very important

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4. Do you expect your birth parent(s) are keen to meet you?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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5. How important is it to you that your birth parent(s) are keen to meet you?

- |            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1          | 2          | 3          | 4         | 5         |
| not at all | not really | neutral    | somewhat  | very      |
| important  | important  | importance | important | important |

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6. Do you expect you will feel easy and comfortable with your birth parent(s)?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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7. How important is it to you that you feel easy and comfortable with your birth parent(s)?

- |            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1          | 2          | 3          | 4         | 5         |
| not at all | not really | neutral    | somewhat  | very      |
| important  | important  | importance | important | important |

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8. Do you expect you will be accepted by your birth parent(s)?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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9. How important is it that you be accepted by your birth parent(s)?

- |            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1          | 2          | 3          | 4         | 5         |
| not at all | not really | neutral    | somewhat  | very      |
| important  | important  | importance | important | important |

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10. Do you expect that your birth parent(s) will be the sort of people you have imagined?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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11. How important is it that your birth parent(s) will be the sort of people you have imagined?

- |            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1          | 2          | 3          | 4         | 5         |
| not at all | not really | neutral    | somewhat  | very      |
| important  | important  | importance | important | important |

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12. Do you expect your adoptive parents to be interested in your reunion?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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13. How important is it to you that your adoptive parents be interested in your reunion?

- |            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1          | 2          | 3          | 4         | 5         |
| not at all | not really | neutral    | somewhat  | very      |
| important  | important  | importance | important | important |

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14. Do you expect you will feel closer to your adoptive parents after the reunion?

- definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

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15. How important is it to you that you feel closer to your adoptive parents after the reunion?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	not really	neutral	somewhat	very
important	important	importance	important	important

☐  
46

16. What kind of effect do you expect the reunion will have on your sense of identity?  
very positive.....1  
positive.....2  
neogative.....3  
very negative.....4

☐  
47

17. How important is it to you that the reunion have a positive effect on your sense of identity?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	not really	neutral	somewhat	very
important	important	importance	important	important

☐  
48

18. Do you expect to receive as much information as you wish to, regarding your birth, origins, and birth parents at the reunion?

definitely yes.....1  
probably yes.....2  
probably no.....3  
definitely no.....4

☐  
49

19. How important is it to you that you receive at the reunion as much information as you wish to regarding your birth, origins, and birth parents?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	not really	neutral	somewhat	very
important	important	importance	important	important

☐  
50

K. GENERAL COMMENTS

Your further comments are welcomed:

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

## APPENDIX 8

Questions used in relinquishing mothers study  
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concerning decision to search or not  
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(Winkler & van Keppel (1984)  
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- 1 I want to be available if my son/daughter ever wants to find me.
- 2 I do not wish to interfere with my son/daughter's relationship with his/her adoptive parents.
- 3 I would like to know whether my son/daughter is alive or dead.
- 4 The adoptive parents would not want me intruding.
- 5 I would like to know how my child has grown up.
- 6 It is better for me to put the memory of my child behind me.
- 7 I want to keep the past difficulties in the past.
- 8 I would like to ease the pain of my loss.
- 9 My life is happy and stable now: I don't want to disrupt it.
- 10 I feel a bond with the adoptive parents and would like them to know it.
- 11 My son/daughter would probably resent me if we ever made contact.
- 12 I have a genetically linked illness which my son/daughter and/or the adoptive parents should know about.
- 13 My present family couldn't cope with it.
- 14 I would like my son/daughter to know about me.
- 15 It would probably come to nothing.
- 16 I would like my son/daughter to know why he/she was given for adoption.
- 17 I wouldn't know where to begin.
- 18 I would like my son/daughter to know about his/her biological father.
- 19 I love my son/daughter and want him/her to know it.
- 20 I wonder if my son/daughter is lonely.
- 21 I wonder if I have grandchildren.
- 22 My parents would like to meet their grandchild.

## APPENDIX 9

Demographic Information on samples used

in Study Ib and Study II/III



## Sex of Participants.

	Stage Ib		Stages II/III	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Male	21	(24)	219	(23)
Female	66	(76)	724	(77)
Total	87	(100)	943	(100)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Current Age of Participants: Study II/III

Age range	Number	%
14 - 20 years	68	7
21 - 30 years	296	32
31 - 40 years	337	36
41 - 50 years	140	15
51 - 60 years	77	8
61 - 70 years	19	2
71 plus years	3	0

\*\*\*\*\*

## Marital Status of Participants

Marital Status	Study Ib		Study II/III	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
single	14	(16)	206	(22)
married	54	(62)	578	(61)
separated	7	( 8)	38	( 4)
divorced	6	( 7)	67	( 7)
widowed	1	( 1)	11	( 1)
defacto	5	( 6)	42	( 4)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Occupation categories of participants

Occupation Category	Study Ib		Study II/III	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
home duties	33	(38)	301	(32)
unskilled	1	( 1)	26	( 3)
semiskilled	22	(26)	69	( 7)
clerical/sales	Not incl.		146	(16)
managerial/professional	21	(24)	252	(27)
unemployed/student	9	(10)	60	( 6)
other	Not incl.		81	( 9)
no answer	1		8	

\*\*\*\*\*

### Ethnic background of participants

ethnic group	Study Ib		Study II/III		
	overall	Adopt. Mother	Adopt. Father	Birth Mother	Birth Father
Australian	72	770	740	400	227
European	7	50	55	41	47
British	not asked	100	116	87	60
Asian	1	2	1	3	1
Aboriginal	-	-	-	1	1
Other	6	10	10	7	14
Unknown	-	5	10	399	586
No answer	1	6	11	5	7

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## APPENDIX 10

Factor Loadings for the 25 Variables on each of the 4 Factors

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in Study I

No.	Variable Wording	Factor Loading F.1	Factor Loading F.2	Factor Loading F.3	Factor Loading F.4
1.	I felt different from other people because I am adopted.	.52772	.46154	.24081	.08349
2.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance left me uncertain about how my life would unfold.	.39978	.31896	.28377	.54750
3.	I felt cut off from my ancestry.	.26444	.18676	.71652	.21954
4.	I felt I really didn't belong.	.30948	.56688	.50198	.05512
5.	It was easy for me to feel close with people.	.20919	.74191	.12910	-.02973
6.	It was easy for me to trust people.	.18034	.79571	.02505	.15687
7.	I wondered who I looked like	.72772	.11624	.05939	.39676
8.	My biological parents were of little concern to me.	E X C L U D E D			
9.	I wondered about how I was born.	.00556	.24398	.49351	.47915
10	I felt comfortable about being the child of both my adoptive and biological parents.	.11708	.76006	.12730	.09975
11.	Being adopted meant a major part of my life was missing.	.57565	.37272	.49669	.09975
12.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance caused me uncertainty regarding my susceptibility to medical complaints and illnesses.	.73491	.03689	.13749	.21550
13.	I wondered if my natural mother thought about things the way I did.	.28083	.13490	-.01826	.86008

No.	Variable Wording	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor
		Loading F.1	Loading F.2	Loading F.3	Loading F.4
14.	I wondered if my natural mother had the same interests as I did.	.16972	.03586	.30511	.83342
15.	I wondered who I really was.	.64406	.25340	.14430	.37429
16.	I wanted to know if I had any relatives.	.63782	.05428	.33016	.25490
17.	I felt I had no roots.	.69005	.23628	.41396	.16491
18.	I felt that I had a ghost in the background that influenced what I did.	.51275	.48273	.09168	.23922
19.	I had a sense of incompleteness.	.65104	.35777	.27709	.19517
20.	I felt like a second class person.	.25351	.71042	.32960	.00607
21.	I worried that people would know I was different.	.12777	.70772	.11724	.27066
22.	Because I didn't know where fitted in my family tree, I had no sense of continuity.	.52064	.43781	.52132	.14886
23.	I wanted to meet another person who shared my biology.	.23151	.10374	.76753	.10527
24.	Honesty was especially important to me.	.77076	.24182	.02520	-.09099
25.	I always liked to know where I stood.	.66376	.28569	.25230	.03418

## APPENDIX 11

Factor Loadings on 52 Identity Scales for Three Factors

Table A  
Biological Identity

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
1.	Honesty is especially important to me.	.07375	-.05408	No
2.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	.53554	.59086	Yes
3.	I wonder who I really am.	.60310	.62886	Yes
4.	It is easy for me to trust people.	-.23500	-.17557	No
5.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	.57859	.57551	Yes
6.	I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	.40517	.45731	No
7.	I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	-.25785	-.36876	No
8.	I feel I have no roots.	.51305	.61871	Yes
9.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	.54714	.59587	Yes
10.	I always like to know where I stand.	.06113	.09992	No
11.	I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	.24543	.23587	No
12.	Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	.17127	.22820	No
13.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	-.05322	-.13306	No
14.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	.20188	.29722	No

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
15.	I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	-.33292	-.30117	No
16.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	.70916	.66241	Yes
17.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	.26566	.26867	No
18.	My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	-.12461	-.09723	No
19.	I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	-.50601	-.36694	No
20.	I feel clear about my potential.	-.50728	-.42255	No
21.	Making new friends is especially hard for me.	.26533	.28849	No
22.	I don't care what other people think of me.	-.07918	.00690	No
23.	I feel like a second class person.	.53405	.48350	No
24.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	-.09717	-.15446	No
25.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	.69771	.69328	Yes
26.	I tend to cling to people.	.24850	.23621	No
27.	It is easy for me to feel close to people.	-.21319	-.15519	No
28.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	.42547	.47695	No
29.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	.45403	.54837	No



Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
30.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	.57249	.55425	Yes
31.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	-.36505	-.26365	No
32.	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	-.23508	-.23603	No
33.	I feel I am in full control of my life.	-.49706	-.38923	No
34.	I feel I really don't belong.	.68117	.61188	Yes
35.	I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	.61336	.45967	No
36.	I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	-.10603	-.07814	No
37.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	.41337	.58185	No
38.	I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	-.43568	-.37406	No
39.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	.613359	.67424	Yes
40.	I usually feel at peace with myself.	-.57920	-.42757	No
41.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	.68919	.66508	Yes
42.	I mix easily with people.	-.22608	-.20200	No
43.	I wonder who I look like.	.25127	.34092	No
44.	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	.20401	.32569	No
45.	I find it hard to break relationships.	.10423	.09685	No
46.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	-.58378	-.54206	Yes

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
47.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	-.09701	-.14343	No
48.	I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	.29104	.27450	No
49.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	.71766	.61459	Yes
50.	I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	-.06180	.10628	No
51.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	.70718	.58545	Yes
52.	I expect a lot of people.	.05963	.04875	No

Table B  
Curiosity

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Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
1.	Honesty is especially important to me.	.08149	.18747	No
2.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	.47283	.44139	No
3.	I wonder who I really am.	.47664	.46751	No
4.	It is easy for me to trust people.	-.06860	-.09362	No
5.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	.27331	.28080	No
6.	I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	.16789	.13746	No
7.	I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	-.09993	-.09451	No
8.	I feel I have no roots.	.39616	.32335	No
9.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	-.20033	.18817	No
10.	I always like to know where I stand.	.09386	.07992	No
11.	I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	.13743	.17042	No
12.	Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	.10852	.22920	No
13.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	-.62948	-.68392	Yes

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
14.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	.62819	.67669	Yes
15.	I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	-.16207	-.15332	No
16.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	.17496	.19922	No
17.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	.63675	.59424	Yes
18.	My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	-.30513	-.42552	No
19.	I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	-.16873	-.23936	No
20.	I feel clear about my potential.	-.08195	-.10969	No
21.	Making new friends is especially hard for me.	.02815	.04576	No
22.	I don't care what other people think of me.	-.09643	-.19170	No
23.	I feel like a second class person.	.07834	.04359	No
24.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	-.68113	-.68609	Yes
25.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	.27414	.27255	No
26.	I tend to cling to people.	.07041	.08887	No
27.	It is easy for me to feel close to people.	-.07959	-.07439	No
28.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	.71076	.69476	Yes

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
29.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	.57602	.53247	Yes
30.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	.24623	.15526	No
31.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	-.51117	-.59723	Yes
32.	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	-.25206	-.34082	No
33.	I feel I am in full control of my life.	-.12114	-.13648	No
34.	I feel I really don't belong.	.08051	.11767	No
35.	I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	.18568	.16353	No
36.	I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	.03127	.11016	No
37.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	.54933	.51068	Yes
38.	I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	-.47078	-.45389	No
39.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	.45751	.39372	No
40.	I usually feel at peace with myself.	-.14239	-.13326	No
41.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	.26057	.20629	No
42.	I mix easily with people.	.00892	-.05265	No
43.	I wonder who I look like.	.69988	.61869	Yes
44.	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	.75244	.65558	Yes
45.	I find it hard to break relationships.	.21154	.11203	No

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retaine Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
46.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	-.29468	-.26483	No
47.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	-.57712	-.58641	Yes
48.	I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	.14011	.31300	No
49.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	.31019	.39561	No
50.	I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	-.02716	-.01601	No
51.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	.30282	.24115	No
52.	I expect a lot of people.	.02923	.01656	No

---

Table C  
Abandonment

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
1.	Honesty is especially important to me.	.05349	.09974	No
2.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	.06348	.12331	No
3.	I wonder who I really am.	.04891	.07264	No
4.	It is easy for me to trust people.	.01556	.10511	No
5.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	.15813	.17920	No
6.	I am torn between my feelings for my two sets of parents.	.13916	.22618	No
7.	I feel comfortable with my adoptive parents.	-.09480	-.05640	No
8.	I feel I have no roots.	.08466	.01157	No
9.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	.13833	.09443	No
10.	I always like to know where I stand.	.07935	.23993	No
11.	I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	.56166	.57704	Yes
12.	Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	.57375	.58018	Yes
13.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	-.15262	-.04711	No

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
14.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	.11609	.19217	No
15.	I feel as if I really belong to my adoptive family.	.01297	-.04960	No
16.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	.13452	.21024	No
17.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	.03632	.25734	No
18.	My medical history and information is as complete as I require.	.02360	-.04957	No
19.	I feel no different to anyone else just because I'm adopted.	-.10948	-.10829	No
20.	I feel clear about my potential.	-.18628	-.26621	No
21.	Making new friends is especially hard for me.	.19232	.25991	No
22.	I don't care what other people think of me.	-.18845	-.24428	No
23.	I feel like a second class person.	.22189	.21562	No
24.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	-.10209	-.10026	No
25.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	.16315	.12450	No
26.	I tend to cling to people.	.62389	.58667	Yes
27.	It is easy for me to feel close to people.	.07049	.20558	No
28.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	.13023	.12463	No



Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
29.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	.14418	.17336	No
30.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	.27191	.31481	No
31.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	-.12590	-.07398	No
32.	I am seldom concerned about what parts of me are influenced by heredity and what by environment.	-.06662	-.12530	No
33.	I feel I am in full control of my life.	-.23874	-.23997	No
34.	I feel I really don't belong.	.23544	.19086	No
35.	I feel I'm different because I'm adopted.	.13481	.10431	No
36.	I want my adoptive parents to be proud of me.	.10758	.14837	No
37.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	.10825	.05544	No
38.	I am what I am; my biological background is of little significance.	-.08876	-.04261	No
39.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	.12845	.07694	No
40.	I usually feel at peace with myself.	-.27941	-.16623	No
41.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	.21054	.28312	No
42.	I mix easily with people.	-.09027	-.10648	No
43.	I wonder who I look like.	.09321	.13181	No
44.	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	.13067	.11421	No
45.	I find it hard to break relationships.	.57466	.60669	Yes
46.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	-.16297	-.12832	No

Item No.	Item Wording	Sample 1	Sample 2	Retained Yes/No
		Factor Loading	Factor Loading	
47.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	-.05646	-.15868	No
48.	I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	.55381	.50677	Yes
49.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	.15024	.19709	No
50.	I feel as if what I make of my life depends almost entirely on my own efforts.	.01685	.09187	No
51.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	.07528	.18283	No
52.	I expect a lot of people.	.28125	.19263	No

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## APPENDIX 12

Final Solution of 30 Identity Scales Detailing Communalities

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Scores for each Scale and Final Factor Loadings

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for each Factor

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Item No.	Item Wording	F. 1      F. 2      F. 3		
		Commun- ality	Biolog. Identity	Curi- ousity. Aband- onment
2.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	.52812	.54491	
3.	I wonder who I really am.	.58788	.60724	
5.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	.52512	.65339	
8.	I feel I have no roots.	.51238	.62406	
9.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	.43478	.61511	
16.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	.61895	.73955	
25.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	.61746	.71954	
30.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	.50873	.60586	
34.	I feel I really don't belong	.60027	.73113	
39.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	.65087	.67425	
41.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	.61895	.69295	
46.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	.51712	-.64829	
49.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	.64165	.69635	

Item No.	Item Wording	F. 1    F. 2    F. 3		
		Commun- ality	Biolog. Identity	Curi- osity. Aband- onment
51.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	.52601	.64271	
37.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	.60412	.54823	.54135
13.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	.43144		-.62751
14.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	.49724		.64587
17.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	.46923		.61408
24.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	.48735		-.66797
28.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	.70979		.70957
29.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	.57007		.55016
31.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	.50302		-.52152
43.	I wonder who I look like.	.54185		0.66515
44.	I wonder if my birth mother has the same interests as I do.	.58510		0.70298
47.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	.35958		-.56916

Item No.	Item Wording	F. 1    F. 2    F. 3		
		Commun- ality	Biolog. Curi- Identity    ousity.	Aband- onment
11.	I try too hard to be accepted by people I care about.	.44519		.57606
12.	Separations are particularly upsetting for me.	.43485		.61887
26.	I tend to cling to people.	.43138		.61933
45.	I find it hard to break relationships.	.38774		.59981
48.	I am more sensitive than most people to rejection.	.45155		.54109

## APPENDIX 13

Final Adoptee Identity Measure

Below are some statements with which some people agree and others disagree. There are no right or wrong answers. Whatever you happen to feel about a statement is the right answer for you. Read each statement carefully and circle the number which best describes your feeling about the statement today.

Please answer every question.

Answer 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral;  
4 = disagree; or 5 = strongly disagree.

SS No.	Item wording	1	2	3	4	5
BI 1.	I feel as if there's some central part of me which still remains hidden.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 2.	I wonder who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 3.	I am not especially interested in finding out about my birth parents.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 4.	As I was growing up I found it more difficult than others to get a clear picture of who I was.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 5.	I feel I have no roots.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 6.	I wonder about the events surrounding my birth.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 7.	I often feel as if I am being moulded in a way which is at odds with who I am naturally.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 8.	I feel insecure about the identity I've built because I really don't know what it is based on.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 9.	I wonder if my birth mother thinks about things the way I do.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 10.	The historical details of my birth family are of no concern to me.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 11.	I feel as if parts of me don't fit together.	1	2	3	4	5



SS No.	Item wording	1	2	3	4	5
CU 12.	I need to solve the mystery of my beginnings.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 13.	Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 14.	Knowing where I fit in my family tree is important to my sense of continuity.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 15.	Being part of my adoptive family is enough for me.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 16.	I feel I really don't belong.	1	2	3	4	5
BI & CU:						
17.	I feel cut off from my ancestry.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 18.	Being adopted means a major part of my life is missing.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 19.	I feel as if there's another me inside that I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 20.	I wonder who I look like.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 21.	I wonder if my birth mother has the interests as I do.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 22.	I feel as if I am a whole and complete person.	1	2	3	4	5
CU 23.	Any biological brothers and sisters are of no interest to me.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 24.	Until I know what my genealogical background is I will not be able to integrate the different parts of myself.	1	2	3	4	5
BI 25.	Not knowing my genetic inheritance leaves me uncertain about how my life will unfold.	1	2	3	4	5

### Scoring the Adoptee Identity Measure

This measure comprises two scales: Biological Identity (BI), and Curiosity (CU). Each subscale to be separately scored.

Recode: Items 3, 10, 15, 22 and 23 must be reverse coded prior to the scoring. They are marked with an \*.

#### Biological Identity:

Add scores for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22\*, 24 and 25. Then divide total by 15.

#### Curiosity:

Add scores for items 3\*, 6, 9, 10\*, 12, 14, 15\*, 17, 20, 21, and 23\*. Then divide by 11.

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Abandonment Scale:

- AB A. I try too hard to be accepted by people I 1 2 3 4 5  
care about.
- AB B. Separations are particularly upsetting 1 2 3 4 5  
for me.
- AB C. I tend to cling to people. 1 2 3 4 5
- AB D. I find it hard to break relationships. 1 2 3 4 5
- AB E. I am more sensitive than most people to 1 2 3 4 5  
rejection.

Scoring: Add scores for items A, B, C, D, and E. Then divide  
by 5.

## APPENDIX 14

Norms and Standard Deviations

for  
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Adoptee Identity Measure

## BIOLOGICAL IDENTITY

AGE	Males			Females			Total		
	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD
14-19 yrs	12	2.461	1.006	38	2.693	.942	50	2.637	.952
20-29 yrs	60	2.466	.739	216	2.530	.898	276	2.516	.865
30-39 yrs	86	2.570	.784	258	2.240	.851	344	2.322	.846
40-49 yrs	40	2.368	.810	125	2.256	.788	165	2.283	.792
50-59 yrs	12	2.533	1.010	67	2.143	.668	79	2.203	.854
60+ yrs	8	2.700	.767	18	2.393	1.119	26	2.487	1.037

For the entire population: Mean = 2.384 S.D = .861 No. = 940

## CURIOSITY

AGE	Males			Females			Total		
	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD
14-19 yrs	12	2.189	1.157	38	2.038	.997	50	2.075	1.027
20-29 yrs	60	2.114	.856	216	1.976	.802	276	2.006	.814
30-39 yrs	86	2.038	.638	258	1.813	.785	344	1.869	.757
40-49 yrs	40	1.827	.634	125	1.862	.781	165	1.853	.747
50-59 yrs	12	2.167	.803	67	1.794	.944	79	1.850	.929
60+ yrs	8	2.761	.912	18	1.874	1.001	26	2.147	1.089

For the entire population: Mean = 1.924 SD = .815 No. = 940

The Norms and Standard Deviations are provided for the Abandonment Scale for the interest of the reader. This scale is not recommended for use with the Adoptee Identity Test.

#### ABANDONMENT

AGE	Males			Females			Total		
	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD	No	Mean	SD
14-19 yrs	12	2.050	.950	38	2.495	1.190	50	2.388	1.144
20-29 yrs	60	2.617	.801	216	2.516	.863	276	2.538	.850
30-39 yrs	86	2.651	.801	258	2.347	.861	344	2.423	.856
40-49 yrs	40	2.715	.805	125	2.469	.959	165	2.529	.927
50-59 yrs	12	2.450	.444	67	2.594	1.129	79	2.572	1.053
60+ yrs	8	2.700	.370	18	3.000	1.697	26	2.918	1.420

For the entire population: Mean= 2.499 SD= .923 No.= 940